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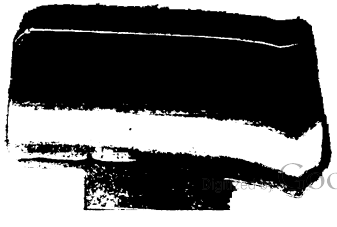

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

BY

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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PREFACE

IN an address to a body of clergy delivered a short time ago, Dr. Sanday, Professor of Divinity and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, said that what Germany is thinking to-day many circles in Europe and America will be thinking to-morrow. It was with reference to matters of a religious character that this remark was made. As an accomplished student of the religion of the New Testament, Professor Sanday knows perfectly well that the Germans, on the whole, are at the present time doing more to promote the progress of theological inquiry than any other European people.

It is quite true that German professors sometimes startle us with theories which are resting on the tiniest basis of fact, and are more ingenious than convincing. But the appearance from time to time of these daring speculations must not make us forget the vast amount of

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solid and conscientious work which is constantly being produced by the professors of theology at the various German universities.

It is probable that the people of Great Britain and America take a deeper interest in religious matters than is the case in Germany, and that religious activity takes a more practical form among the English-speaking people. But the Germans have devoted more attention to the nature of religious phenomena and the foundations on which the religious consciousness of mankind is based.

If we want to know what religion is, if we want to learn how it arose and developed in the bosom of the race, if we want a satisfactory conception of the place religion occupies in the general scheme of human thought and action, we shall find that more has been thought and said upon these matters in Germany than anywhere else.

Until recently one of the chief difficulties confronting the spread of German learning has been the form in which it was expressed. Most German books dealing with religious questions have been written by experts for experts; to understand them required a special training and an intimate acquaintance with the developing phases of religious speculation. It is only a very small minority who can follow a writer

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when his works are written on the assumption that the reader is almost as much at home in the subject as he is himself. Literature of this kind, if it can be called literature, is confined within the walls of universities and produces little or no impression on the public as a whole.

It is satisfactory to find that a new school of writers has now arisen among the German people who are discarding the technical and elaborate methods of their predecessors and are addressing themselves directly to the general public. Many of the members of this new school are men of wide and minute learning, authorities of the first rank in their own department; they are permeated by the spirit of modern democracy, and they realise that the best results of scientific inquiry ought not to be confined to academic circles, but should be made accessible to the great body of the people. This can only be accomplished by getting rid of technicalities and speaking in a language which can be understood by all.

One of the most striking examples of this kind of work is Professor Harnack's lectures on the essential characteristics of the Christian religion, which have been translated into English with the title, "What is Christianity?" In these lectures Dr. Harnack was merely

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popularising the results of his inquiries into the origin and growth of the Christian faith. He had already put his ideas before the world in learned and elaborate works on the "History of Christian Doctrine" and the "History of Ancient Christian Literature." But as long as his opinions were shut up in these bulky volumes they were only accessible to a few. It was when he stripped off his scholar's armour and appealed to the public in the ordinary language of the world that his conception of Christianity gained an entrance and acquired an influence in every religious community.

Dr. Bousset has followed in Professor Harnack's steps. Professor Harnack attempted in his famous lectures to answer the question, What is Christianity? Professor Bousset, in the volume which is now placed before the English reader, attempts to answer the still more fundamental question, What is Religion? Christianity is only one of the many forms which religion has assumed, just as European culture is only one of the many forms which civilisation has assumed in the long history of the human race. It is, no doubt, true that the essential nature of religion, as well as the deepest characteristics of civilisation, is best exhibited in its highest forms; and from this point of view an examination into the true nature of Christianity is

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incidentally an inquiry of the first importance into the nature of religion itself. But a recognition of the supreme value of Christianity must not blind us to the fact that all forms of religion contribute something to our knowledge of the nature of the religious consciousness, and that we cannot know what religion is in all its manifestations by studying the Christian religion alone.

The Christian religion is religion at its highest point of development. Religion passed through many stages before it culminated in the Christian faith. In order to understand it in all its aspects we must look at it in its infancy and youth as well as in its maturity. We must look at it as it shows itself in the dim beginnings of humanity; we must look at it as we see it now among the uncivilised races of mankind; we must note the character which it assumed among the great nations of the past; we must mark the features which it exhibits among civilisations different from our own. It is only when we reach the end of a great historic survey such as this that we are in a position to attempt to answer the question as to what religion really is. It is the history of a nation which gives us the deepest insight into its character, and it is the history of religion in all ages and among all peoples which enables

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us to comprehend the essential basis on which religion stands.

One of the great attractions of Professor Bousset's book is that it is written on historical lines, and that his conclusions are based on the great outstanding facts of religious history. It is only within a comparatively recent period that a book of this kind could have been written. As long as the belief prevailed that the Christian faith was the only true religion, and that all other types of religion were base and degrading superstitions, full of falsehood from beginning to end, it was impossible to have a history of the religious ideas of the human race. This used to be the belief of Christendom, and it is only in recent years that it has been superseded by a higher conception of the nature of the relations between the human and the Divine. According to this new and higher conception all forms of religion contain phases of God's revelation of Himself to man. The Christian phase is admitted to be the highest; but the pre-Christian and the non-Christian religions are also, in a humbler sense, revelations of the Divine, and the growing religious life of humanity manifests itself in them as well as in Christianity itself.

With the spread of this view the religions of antiquity and the non-Christian religions of

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contemporary peoples, both civilised and uncivilised, acquired a new meaning, and began to be studied with a fresh and more reverent interest. As a result of these studies we are now in possession of a vast mass of material dealing with the history and characteristics of religious life among ancient and contemporary peoples, and we are able to trace the development of religious ideas from their lowest to their highest stages in the life of man.

Very few living writers are so well equipped for describing the evolution and nature of the religious sentiment as Professor Bousset. He is the son of a German pastor, and was born at Lübeck, in 1865. After completing his preliminary studies at the gymnasium of his native place, he became in succession a student at the universities of Erlangen, Leipzig, and Göttingen. Each of these places of learning marked a stage in his mental development. Beginning his university career under the dominance of traditional religious conceptions, his mind gradually became more liberal in tendency. At Göttingen he was a pupil of one of the most influential German theologians since Schleiermacher, the late Albrecht Ritschl, and although he belongs to a group of young thinkers who have more and more liberated themselves from many of the distinctive

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positions taken up by Ritschl, the spirit of his master is more or less visible in all Professor Bousset's literary work.

One of Dr. Bousset's first works was a volume entitled "The Preaching of Jesus in Opposition to Judaism." In this work he showed that the teaching of Jesus was not a continuation of contemporary Rabbinic teaching with its centre resting on the apocalyptic hopes of Judaism; the preaching of Jesus was the immediate product of His own original creative personality: its points of contact with Judaism were external and not essential, and it is best understood by contrasting, rather than comparing, it with contemporary Rabbinic views. Professor Bousset's next important undertaking was a Commentary on the Apocalypse of John. In this Commentary he adopted what is called in Germany the religious historical method. The object of this method is to compare the religious ideas of one people with another, and to trace, if possible, the historical or psychological connection which exists among religious conceptions as a whole. A few years ago Professor Bousset published what is so far his most important work, "The Religion of the Jews in New Testament Times." In this volume Dr. Bousset at once established his reputation as a scholar of wide and varied learning, with a clear and

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comprehensive grasp of the problem with which he had undertaken to deal. He had been preceded in this task by writers of conspicuous ability like Professor Schürer; but, notwithstanding this, Dr. Bousset's book on Judaism marks a distinct step forward in our knowledge of New Testament times. It is clear from Dr. Bousset's investigations that Judaism at this period had opened its arms to ideas from foreign sources, and that it bears distinct traces of Persian influence.

Dr. Bousset's more recent book consists of lectures on the nature of religion which are now placed before the English reader. These lectures are written on the same lines as Dr. Bousset's "Jesus," which was translated into English a year or two ago. They are popular in form, but are the result of deep and prolonged study of the subject, and may safely be accepted as one of the best extant introductions to the study of religious phenomena. Readers of this volume who still adhere to the traditional view of Christianity may be startled and offended at the freedom with which Dr. Bousset criticises certain conspicuous elements in ecclesiastical dogma. But they must remember that the lectures in this volume were originally addressed to an audience which was not prepared to accept the ordinary conservative conception of

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the Christian faith, and they must also consider the point of view from which Professor Bousset approaches the fundamental facts of the Christian faith. According to Dr. Bousset all the later developments of Christian dogma must be tested by the teaching of Jesus Himself. If these later developments are not contained in the primitive teaching of the Founder of Christianity, or are contrary to His teaching, they must not be regarded as essential elements of the Christian faith. The teaching of the Founder is the supreme test of what is essentially Christian, and all later developments must be judged by this test. This is a point of view which is gaining many adherents all over the world, and it is desirable to have it placed before us by such an able exponent as Dr. Bousset.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THESE lectures are to deal with a subject of the greatest importance, the knowledge of the phenomenon which is known by that foreign word "religion," and in dealing with this we are brought face to face with the most momentous, the most powerful factor that affects the mental life of mankind.

Wherever we look we find that practically no tribe or community of human beings is without some kind of a religion, although those scholars may possibly be right in thinking they have discovered here and there, in some corner of the world, small tribes who are entirely without it. It does not, of necessity, follow that this conclusion is merely due to false and insufficient investigation. It is quite true that traces of a religion are but rarely met with in the excavations and discoveries belonging to the earlier Stone Age and are only found to any large

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extent in the later period. Yet these excavations throw light on a period removed from us by many thousand years, a period, however, in which man already possessed a religion. And although, naturally, there must be some point of time when religion had its beginning, it is still incontestable that wherever human life advanced a stage religion was evolved.

Religion has conducted man to his highest point of civilisation; and this is so in our own time. To-day, it is true, we are confronted by the fact that, as has usually happened in periods of excessive culture, numerous sections of the people are separated from religion, but we are justified in considering this as merely a passing phase. Modern society and modern civilisation in both Europe and America are still connected in a thousand ways with religion. It must not be forgotten that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Churches are much more powerful and stable than they were a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, and that the religious bodies of North America which are in no wise supported by the State display great vitality. And again, this fact must not be overlooked, that among the most highly cultured people, among the leaders of thought, even when they are not in harmony with the established religion, there is

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an interest in religious matters and a spirit of inquiry concerning them. It is only, indeed, in times of the greatest and most widespread intellectual decadence that religion reaches its lowest ebb, and there never has been, and never will be, a civilisation which is progressive and vital unaccompanied by religion. "Men," says Goethe, "are only creative in Poetry and Art as long as they are religious; without religion they are merely imitative, lacking in originality."

Religion has exercised the most profound influence on human life; it may truly be said that all progress in human life has been evolved in close connection with religion, and indeed it almost seems as if religion were the source of this progress. The use of fire, by which mankind appears to have been originally distinguished from the animal world, owes its origin, as far as we know, to the religious worship of that wondrous element. Innumerable traces bear witness to the fact that the kindling, the looking after, and the maintenance of the fire were religious acts, and we are justified in believing that even before man understood how to use or produce fire he worshipped it. Again, there is evidence in the customs of savage nations that the breeding of cattle, the taming of them, and the use of domestic animals are closely connected with

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the religious worship of these creatures. The earliest artistic manifestations of mankind, if not exclusively religious, are yet intimately related to religion. The ornaments with which the savage decorates his body, the marks he imprints upon it, the pictures he paints upon it, possess an important religious significance, the significance of the magic talisman and the amulet. The most ancient dances are religious dances—the dance of joy at the feast, the circular dance when a sacrifice was offered. Israel danced round the golden calf, King David before the Ark of the Covenant. Side by side with the religious dance was religious music. The early prophets of Israel marched to the sound of harp, drum, flute, and zither (1 Sam. x. 5).

It is a debatable point whether the various pictorial representations on stone, horn, and ivory, in high or low relief, which date from the very earliest period of human history—the early Stone Age—are due to a religious motive or to an instinct for imitation and amusement, or to a purely æsthetic impulse. What is certain, however, is this, that among all civilised peoples the plastic art has developed in close connection with the representation of the Divinity, just as architecture owes its progress to the building of tombs,

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pyramids, obelisks, terraces, and temples of the gods.

The idea of public, inviolable right rests on a religious basis, on the belief that the anger of the Godhead demands from the whole community of worshippers expiation for the wrong done, and that this anger lasts till atonement is rendered. The rudiments of human knowledge originated in connection with religion. The ancient wise men of Babylon held in the very highest reverence the starry powers which ruled in the heavens, for according to their belief these governed the destinies of men. And from this belief arose the foundations of human knowledge: the careful observation of the heavenly bodies, accurate chronology, knowledge of measurements, the first attempt at mathematics. Lastly, the connection between morals and religion is so obvious and so close that it is only necessary to refer to it.

In course of time Religion released from her bonds the various provinces of mental activity which hitherto had been under her domination. This marked a great advance in the history of mankind, by which Religion also benefited. She was deprived of nothing. What she lost in breadth she gained in depth and concentrated energy. In spite of separation from other branches of human activity, religion has ever

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remained the central interest of this activity, and wherever the surging roar of life has been loudest, and wherever human life has been most profoundly moved in struggle and conflict, religion has been the cause.

The object of this little book is to understand the meaning of this phenomenon which we call religion. What a many-sided, Protean idea is presented to us, what a confusing jangle of sounds! Here we encounter joyous confidence, sure of heaven; there frightful, soul-destroying agony; egoism of the rudest type, and a joy in sacrifice which, in the form of the sacrifice of men, children, and sexual honour, shows itself under its most terrible aspect. The tenderest lyrical tones of entrancing sweetness are to be met with as well as the barbaric, awful cruelty of the religious war, the *auto-da-fé* and the Inquisition; the renunciation of the ascetic, of the solitary penitent, of the monk, side by side with the triumphant note of the priest and the prince of the Church who subdues his people and the world. It is a world in which we think we hear the angels singing, and yet close by distorted, demoniacal spirits and all kinds of monstrosities pursue their way. Now we are in the presence of sublime rest, tranquillity, simplicity, now of a witches' cauldron of storm-tossed passion.

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How can we find our way through this mass of phenomena? Many people show us an apparently simple way: they tell us the question concerning the nature of religion is merely the question of the nature of Christianity. Christianity alone (they say) is the true religion; all others are false, and the further men progressed the more corrupt did the other religions of man become, for humanity had been corrupt since the fall of Adam. Or they tell us the religion of the Old and New Testaments is revealed religion; all others are natural religions, the product of man's thought or imagination, and without any guarantee of their truth and permanence.

Against this widespread opinion the following points are offered for consideration:

1. The view here asserted that God allows the nations that have not accepted the revelation of the Old and New Testaments to go their own way, sinking deeper and deeper into darkness and decay, is, if we consider the whole bearings of it, a narrow-minded and melancholy view of the history of humanity. It is, in truth, an irreligious and Godless attitude. Apart from its falsity, it is a dangerous apologetic for Christian theologians to attempt with great sagacity—apparently in order to maintain the honour of the Christian religion—to prove

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that the non-Christian religions are illusions, products of the imagination and the intense desire of mankind. For this apologetic entirely forgets that the very arts which it employs can be used against itself, and the very same arguments may be used to prove that the Christian religion is an illusion.

2. The whole trend of human history is opposed to this view. Far indeed from showing us an evolution from a higher to a lower civilisation, or the arbitrary play of forces, history (in spite of many periods of stagnation and retrogression) shows us very clearly great and stable progress, a slowly developed but firm aspiration after higher ideas and a more intense life in which religion participates. The theologian who traces the history of religion from a higher to a lower plane does not see how he is entirely opposed to our knowledge of the intellectual life of mankind.

3. The whole history of religion and of free inquiry concerning religion is opposed to this theory. This shows us the history of the Old and the New Testament so closely connected with the religious history of the surrounding peoples and civilisations that the distinction between revealed and natural religion is impossible. The history of the Old Testament religion shows us a progress from a lower to a higher stage,

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a slow growth from imperfection to perfection. Ecclesiastical history also reveals in the development of Christianity an ever purer conception—gradual, it is true—of the religion of the spirit and of truth which is displayed in the Gospels. It is no question of, This religion is true, *that* is false; everywhere we perceive growth, evolution, imperfection striving towards perfection.

Thus for the reasons just stated we proceed on our inquiries from a different standpoint, which will be justified in the course of further explanation. The whole history of the religious life of mankind stands to us as the great handiwork of God, a ceaseless aspiration and constant intercourse of God with man, of man with his Maker, in accordance with the stage to which he has attained. The religion of the Old and the New Testaments, however, represents, as we shall see, the purest form of religion, and the Gospel, to say the least, the highest and most perfect form to which it has reached. But in spite of this, Christianity is not the one religion, the only religion, but simply the most complete species of the genus.

Hence, in this book, where we are not so much concerned with the practical application of religion as with a clearly defined knowledge of it, the question concerning the nature of religion is of the first importance, that of

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Christianity being secondary. For from a comparative study of the genus we learn to understand thoroughly and completely the most perfect of its species, just as comparative anatomy reveals to us very clearly the highly developed organism of man. The answer to the inquiry concerning the nature of Christianity is not, however, easily given. If we want to separate, with clear perception, the essential from the non-essential, and discover with certainty, in the changing forms of temporary expressions, the eternal, everlasting basis, we cannot do better than apply ourselves to the comparative study of religions.

In pursuing this inquiry concerning religion we turn with complete confidence to the whole wonderful history of religion. In studying this history we must group together phenomena, and arrange them in their right order; we must seize the essential and the permanent in the phenomena as they pass before our eyes, recognise the laws of evolution, and connect the past with the present and the future.

But before dealing with the mass of phenomena, it is to be recommended on pedagogical grounds that some propositions of a general kind should be made touching the nature of religion. Not that these propositions might not be obtained from history itself, or that they

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would not be just as well obtained in the course of an historical survey; but just as before going into a labyrinthine building it is as well to look at the plan, so these general remarks may be found useful. They will serve as the basis; observations obtained, as it were, from a bird's-eye view, which will receive shape, energy, and illumination from later statements.

First of all, it must be clearly noted that religion is a fundamental element in the mental life of mankind, of a primary and not a derivative character. At any rate, the attempts hitherto made to reduce religion to a simple elementary function have failed. Attempts have been made to derive religion from the *Kausalitätsdrang*, the instinct for knowledge; to consider it "the instinctive thought," the elementary stage of true philosophic thought; to degrade it to an æsthetic illusion or to accept its propositions as postulates for the basis of ethics. Opposed to this is the view that in religion we are dealing with a powerful primary manifestation of human personality, derived from nothing, not to be reduced to one of the categories belonging to man's mental life, such as thinking, feeling, willing, but a phenomenon standing by itself.

It is indeed a correct observation, which can be substantiated, that religion is a "striving

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after life." History reveals to us on all sides this striving after life; on all sides we see religion concerned with blessings. These blessings are of different kinds: earthly blessings, appertaining to individual life, such as rain, fertility, sunshine, good hunting, health, the cure of sickness. Then, again, there are the blessings connected with the life of the community: dominion, victory in war, peace, protection of trade and industry, right, freedom, universal prosperity; or the nobler blessings of a future life: a happy fate after death, life with the gods or with one God, reconciliation, forgiveness of sin and guilt, inward peace, moral justice. Even the mystic—who surrenders his own life, and absorbs himself in the Godhead; or the Buddhist monk, animated by a wish to free himself from life and attain to absolute rest—regards the perfect renunciation of his being as a boon in comparison with the painful torment of this worldly existence. Religion is everywhere seen to be a striving after life, after possessions.

The subject of religion may be clearly and accurately distinguished from the other great subjects with which man's mental life is concerned. In our moral dealings the motive of which we are conscious is not, in the first instance, a striving after possessions, though it

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is certain that our ultimate object is to obtain things of priceless worth. But the moral law faces man with stern demands, ignoring all his desires; it confronts him with "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," and oppresses his life as with a strange burden. The aspiration after Truth—it is universally admitted—is only of value when it is completely disinterested. Science and art must be entirely disinterested; the investigator must regard the highest interests of human life as secondary to the interest of Truth. The love of the Beautiful is of a more intense and personal nature, but, as a clever art critic has remarked, it is, and must ever be, an abstract love. It is a love springing from intense contemplation, in which the object remains a thing quite apart from the person interested in it. The desire to have this beauty, to wish to gain possession of it, is no longer æsthetic, and mars the pure, intuitive vision of beauty.

Now, religion stands in complete contrast to all this, for everything connected with it is of the keenest, deepest personal interest. Our will power and our feelings are worked up to the highest point of tension; we desire to have, to possess, to be something. Religion can awaken in us the most intense feeling; it unfetters our mental powers, kindles our firiest passions.

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There is a fomenting, a seething, a wild surging of the good and evil elements within us.

And just because religion is a striving after life it is brought into a peculiarly close and yet a curiously antagonistic relation to every department of human activity which is concerned with the striving after possessions. This peculiar relation does not exist between religion and science, art or morality. Between these it would be easy to establish a profitable and mutually beneficial relation. Antagonisms and contradictions exist but in appearance; they are due to one or the other overstepping the limits of its domain, and they can generally be set right, though often only with time and difficulty.

Much more profound and impenetrable is the problem of religion and civilisation. Religion obtains the benefits which she offers to mankind in a manner different from that which human activity employs to obtain them. Religion stands towards human activity in a peculiarly friendly, yet often hostile relation; she is often, nay usually, the pioneer of new modes of activity of a civilising nature which were not originally due to civilisation, but were the expression and outcome of man's religious life. As we have already mentioned, the use of fire was most probably preceded by the worship of

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fire; worship created its use. When once fire was completely mastered by man, and forced into his service, then (allowing for a considerable number of exceptions) fire-worship ceased. From an object of religious belief fire became the most powerful instrument of civilisation. We have another and a nearer example which can be more easily understood. The belief that the Godhead would avenge the sin of the individual on the whole tribe, town, or nation, causes the tribe, &c., in its own interest to guard against every gross infringement of the law on the part of any individual; hence the idea of public rights is created. The belief vanishes, but the idea of public obligation becomes a powerful lever in the progress of civilisation. Thus civilisation is always the fortunate heiress of religion—fortunate, and yet in a sense unfortunate, for she is never able to enjoy her inheritance quite wholeheartedly. At the very moment when religion gives to civilisation a province of human life for secular use it shows mankind new and higher possessions beyond the horizon of all earthly goods. Her constant cry to civilisation is, "The life which you offer is not the highest of blessings." She imprints on all the works of civilisation the stamp of the transient, the means towards an end. She places the real value of

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life beyond: *Sursum corda!*—"Lift up your hearts!"

But when we consider the relation of religion to civilisation we at once clearly perceive that the definition of religion as a striving after life, after possessions, is inadequate. It is as if we defined music as a noise. Progress, it is true, is based on a striving after life, after possessions, but we need a further distinguishing characteristic of religion; we have found one focus of the ellipse, we must seek another.

We ask ourselves in what way this strife after life is accomplished by religion, and we reply that this is effected in conjunction with the higher powers, spirits, demons, heroes, gods, the Godhead—God. For in all religion we find as a second determining factor the belief in gods or God. The solitary exception is the Buddhist religion, in which there is no thought of a God, and later an attempt will be made to understand this exception.

This second factor in religion—belief in gods—cannot be derived from the first, although many attempts have been made to do so. People have sought to show that this belief in gods arises from the primal necessities of man's life, and have brought forward evidence to prove that the different types of gods clearly correspond to the different wants and ideals of

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humanity. Here we are dealing already with an hypothesis which goes beyond the spiritual phenomenon we are considering, and does violence to it. For wherever we have religious life the gods (or the Godhead) are regarded as absolute realities, more real even than human life. So that if that hypothesis of the purely illusionary significance of belief in gods is to be accepted, how can we explain the predominance of the feelings of fear and anguish in the lowest stages of religion? If the gods owe their origin merely to the wishes of men, and are born of their material needs, how can we explain that dominating element in religion, since man as a creative being can do what instinctive man cannot do?

We therefore maintain from the outset the twofold basis of religion—striving after possessions and belief in gods—without hastily explaining it and simplifying it. Rather, we proceed further with these questions: What are these higher powers? what is meant by reverencing gods, worshipping a God? What is it that impels men to honour some of the powers which rule around them, and not to honour others? How is belief, religion, kindled?

First of all we observe, when we consider the course of religious history, that it is the strange, the marvellous, the incalculable and the

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mighty forces that arouse religious veneration.) From the very earliest times there has ever been a close connection between faith and wonder. Very early does man begin to divide his world into the known and the unknown. Even the lowest type of savage possesses a part of the known world—the cave wherein he dwells, the hunting implements which he uses, the animals he masters and tames, perhaps even a little piece of ground which he cultivates, a hut which he builds. We may therefore venture on the supposition that only when from the immense whole man has divided off for himself a little piece of land which he calls his world does he, filled with immeasurable wonder, rise to the idea of religious veneration. And it is here, on the boundary line between the known and the unknown, that religion originates.

The forest which surrounds the savage is full of spirits; he is conscious of a rustling, a crackling, a creaking, a whispering, of singing and noises. In the woods the elves and kobolds, the fauns and the dryads, the little men and women of the woods, disport themselves. The summits of the mountains are an unknown world; many a one has ascended them and never returned. The avalanches crash down from them, the waters roar. There dwell the

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mischievous wood-demons, the stone-throwing centaurs, "Rubezahl," Pan who frightens the herdsmen, Dionysus with his wild hordes. And besides all these there are the ghosts, the dead whose continued existence is regarded as a matter of course by the childlike mind of the primitive savage. Such spirits are not regarded as especially powerful; they are indeed dependent on the care of the living; they are spoken of as "poor souls." But they are strange, inexplicable, and dwell in the mysterious unknown world. In the gloom of the twilight, in the darkness of the night, by the graves and the cross-roads, they carry on their ghostly existence—Hecate and her savage tribe, the wild huntsman and his hounds. What a profound impress this belief in spirits and ghosts has left even on the mind of modern man!

And now a wonderful and remarkable drama begins: gradually man extends the limits of his world, and from this world which is now known to him, which he has explored and governs, the spirits and gods vanish. Yet the unknown world, the world of faith and religion, never vanishes. The farther man penetrates the more unfathomable becomes that unknown world; the more he learns to rule the world, the more mysterious, wonderful, and immense appears that world which he does not command,

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and the more he knows about it the more incomprehensible he feels it to be. For one riddle that he solves ten others confront him. And it is here, on the boundary-line of the known and the unknown world, that religion is kindled.

From the spirits which rule on the earth man turns his glance to the heavenly powers which blow, rustle, rage, thunder, lighten, rain, shine, sparkle, and illumine, which bring life, light and prosperity; to the powers which dwell beneath the earth and bring fruitfulness and harvest to the fields, which rule over life and death. No longer does he seek the gods only in the marvellous, the unexpected, the strange, the inexplicable, but also in the still more wonderful, mysterious and eternal ordinances of the universe. To the Greeks Moira, Fate (*Fatum*) was the mightiest power, to which even the gods bowed; the native of India expresses the idea of unalterable law by the word *rta*, the Persian *Asha*. And thus the gods become the spiritual powers which, in accordance with eternal, inviolable laws, guide the destinies of the nations in holiness and righteousness. But still the primitive idea of religion always remains the same, fear of the mysterious, superior power of the gods, which the Greek by his δεοὶ χρείττονες ("the gods

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are more than mortals") has expressed with absolute clearness.

Let us consider how this idea works out. To us moderns it is also the basis of all religion. For however greatly the known world has widened for us, still larger looms the unknown world. With all our great capacity we remain throughout our life chained and confined to our little planet. The Kopernican theory has taught us that this our planet is no longer the middle point of the world, as an earlier knowledge believed, but merely an atom in the universe. We are all drifting along in frail skiffs, and everywhere we are surrounded by dizzy abysses. Whether, armed with a telescope, we gaze at the infinitely great and perceive one starry world revolving round another, or with a microscope we study the infinitely little; whether we lift our eyes to the Milky Way, or cast them down towards the smallest pebbles of the great universe, at the molecules and the atoms, we are for ever possessed of this dizzy feeling of the abysses which surround our life. And amid all this wondrously great and wondrously little there is a noble, mysterious striving and aspiration in life in all its forms, after inviolable and inflexible laws before which we stand amazed. Thus, in my opinion, it is just to us modern men that the basis of all

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religion is seen to be trembling fear and reverence for the great realities amid which we live. Every one who is susceptible to this feeling is, and must be, susceptible to religion.

But just as when we said that religion was a striving after life, after possessions, we had not completely defined it, so in saying that it is a timid, reverential recognition of the superior powers of spirits and gods, of the Godhead or God, we have also given no complete definition. Rather is it that in these two attitudes of mind we have found the true foci, and now we must seek to define the circumference of religion.

In bringing these two attitudes into closer connection it may be said on the one hand that religion is not merely an egoistic striving after possessions, the attempt of man to assert his individuality in the world around him, by which means his subordinate position is brought closer to the Godhead. We see that religion is, as well as this, something higher, a simple feeling of self-surrender to the Godhead. In all stages of religion we meet with phenomena which display this aspect in absolute simplicity. We see the desire, often intensified to madness, to sacrifice to the Godhead all possessions, even life and sex honour (*e.g.*, asceticism, expiation, human sacrifice, prostitution in the service of

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the gods). We have the casting of the being on the Godhead without any personal demand; spiritual absorption in Him, which leads to the entire surrender of the Ego (as in the case of the mystic); a striving after the very life of the Godhead, a longing after God which is expressed in its highest form in the saying, "If I have but Thee I ask for neither heaven nor earth."

On the other hand, we may say that religion, if it is to remain healthy, can never be completely severed from the egoistic feeling; it cannot be mere reverence of the Godhead apart from all desires, nor simply the feeling of dependence. Healthy religion must always contain an element of personal interest; it must be personal relationship, a desire to render but likewise to receive. Religion is personal relation with the Godhead. Let us now examine a little more closely this statement that we have made, and the vivid contradictions to it which the life of religion unfolds.

Now, in every religion there are two aspects which must be considered together. On the one hand there are the superior powers which man worships, in their nature often hateful and mysterious; he must flee from them, hide from them in horror, anguish, overwhelming fear and awe. And yet, on the other hand, he

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cannot get free from them; he does not, indeed, venture to do so, he clings to them, he feels himself connected with them, he belongs to them and they to him. He raises his hands inploringly towards them, he gives so that he may receive—he sacrifices; he believes that the gods hear him and take an interest in him and his doings. Only where these two beliefs are found together do we get true religion. In the lowest stages of religious life as a rule man only worships the inferior beings, the tiny spirits of nature, the souls of the dead, &c. He does indeed know of the superior powers in the heavens which storm, and rage, and shine, and illuminate, but this is mere religious feeling and is not religion. For he does not yet venture to believe that these powers are exercised on his behalf. Only very gradually have men come to this thought, and have turned their attention to the sun, the moon, the stars, which illumine, and have said to the God of heaven who storms and thunders, "Thou art our God and our Father." Such a belief, indeed, lies at the root of all religion, a belief which ever increases until the Christ comes and says to the almighty God, "Thou art My Father." All religion is—and the higher we rise the more true this is—a casting of the self into the abyss, a wondrous miracle of human confidence.

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In all forms of religious life there are two dominating motive powers, and the old question of whether fear and terror or love and confidence should prevail in religion admits of no simple solution. Both impetuses, centripetal and centrifugal, are a driving force in all religion that is living, and act in such a manner that the soul of man reaches within measurable distance of the Godhead. Where there is no trembling, timid fear of God, there is no true religion. For man is not permitted to measure himself with God, to place himself side by side with Him. It is presumption—the Greeks called it ὕβρις—the greatest of all spiritual sins, if he ventures to do this. Man must be conscious of the distance between himself and God. This is the first law in religion, "for with the gods must no man presume to stand on an equality." But, on the other hand, fear and terror *alone* do not constitute religion; this feeling must not entirely predominate if there is to be religion. Man must also feel drawn towards the Godhead, and the more spiritual religion becomes the stronger is the impulse of confidence and love. But even in the most elevated of religions the motive power of fear does not vanish entirely. It is there in the background, from which belief and confidence emerge. Even in the prayer of Jesus,

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"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes," both these motives find a place. With impregnable certainty Luther expressed this idea when he said, "We must fear God in all things, and we must love Him and trust Him." Belief is a light in darkness, an attraction and a repulsion, trembling fear and exultant joy. This is a great paradox, but so it is.

When we consider religion from this standpoint we shall then understand why in all living religions, first vaguely and then gradually clearly, and as the centre, there is the idea of redemption, the belief in a higher life. All religion, as we have said, rests on the striking contrasts between the known and the unknown world. Man desires to emerge, to be free from the petty world which surrounds him, from its power, its conditions, its narrowness, its necessities. He desires to be outwardly free, but also inwardly free—free from the sordid daily limitations, the narrow habitations and boundaries of human life, the sensual bondage of which his better, nobler self is conscious.

In the very lowest stage of religion this instinct for redemption either does not exist or is very vague indeed; here it is the egoistic instinct that predominates. Man wants some-

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thing from the Being whom he honours; he gives in order to receive. But even in this lowest form of religion there are yet traces of that feeling for salvation, an absorption in the Godhead, a desire for self-abnegation. And the more spiritual religion becomes the more these phenomena appear to which reference has already been made—ascetic practices of all kinds, the annihilation of the natural, sensual life, ecstasy, religious "possession," the God-like disposition of the religious mystic who absorbs his whole soul in the Divine and turns away utterly from all earthly things. Many of the great religions, especially those of India—Brahminism, Buddhism—express this idea in its magnificent simplicity and austerity. The longing to be free from this life, to attain eternal rest, is the central idea, and destroys all others. Although this idea of redemption in its absolute and exclusive form may be dangerous to religion, yet it is an essential part of all higher religious life. Religions have rightly been arranged according as this belief in salvation was strong and powerful, and this thought of a higher life occupied a prominent position; thus in order of rank Brahminism and Buddhism occupy a lower position than Platonism, the religion of the later, cultured Greek world, and Christianity stands at the highest point of evolution.

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Some general ideas have here been given which must now be explained more fully—they must be made living and pregnant. We propose to wander through the wide world of religious life; we do this with a sense of reverence, convinced that we are dealing with the most powerful fact in man's mental life. Those who reject decisively this statement of belief, who believe that the religious life of man is merely fantasy created by man's urgent impulse, and an illusion, will have no desire to go farther with me on my journey. It would require an entirely separate disquisition to deal with these objectors, and at present time does not permit of this. But those who have had some experience of the religious life, who feel within themselves at least a questioning and a seeking after this side of life, will accompany me on my way. In doing this they can prove whether we are right in saying that the whole religious life of man and his history springs from the work and action of God by means of which He draws men individually from error to truth, from imperfection to perfection, from egoism to fraternity, from the sensual to the moral, from the natural to the spiritual, and attracts them to Himself.

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CHAPTER II

THE RELIGION OF SAVAGES—TRIBAL RELIGION

IT is an old matter of dispute whether in investigating the beginnings of the religious life of man we ought to start with the religious condition of the uncivilised peoples of to-day. It is pointed out in this connection that if we cannot here show with absolute clearness a decadence of human life, we are yet dealing with forms of human life which have remained stationary and unprogressive for thousands of years. It is stagnation or distinct retrogression. If we want to observe the beginnings of budding religious life (they say), we must watch the soul of the child as it develops. It may be at once conceded that the observation of the religious development of the child may be of great value in investigating religion, but it must not be forgotten that the forms under which the religious life of the child develops are already firmly established forms. And further,

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it may be granted that we must regard the religious life of the ancestors of progressive peoples as immeasurably fresher, more vital, and more capable of development than the stagnant life of the present-day people who have remained low in the scale of civilisation. Nevertheless, the excavations, dating from prehistoric times, in modern civilised countries, as well as the conclusions arrived at by a study of comparative folklore, show an extraordinary agreement between the earliest stages of human life and the mode of life among present-day savages, and the view therefore seems to be justified that the religious life of the latter reflects the religion of mankind in the earliest days.

But which nations and races shall we consider as uncivilised? Speaking in general terms, we may consider as such the great mass of the human race: the Malay-Polynesians, the American Indians, half the Mongolian race (particularly the Mongolians of Siberia), and the Negro race. When we speak of all these peoples as savages the term must be understood to imply reservations. Among such people various degrees of approach to civilisation must be distinguished. On the lowest stage of civilisation we must place the Bushmen of South Africa and the old dwarf population of

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Central Africa, and also the inhabitants of extreme South America, the dusky-coloured race of Melanesia, and some Mongol races. Next, a stage higher, come the Malay-Polynesians and American Indians, who are perhaps connected; on the third and highest stage may be placed the Negro races, who here and there almost approach to civilisation. It is not without reason that an attempt has been made to compare this threefold classification of the savage races with the threefold division of the prehistoric civilisation of the ancient and modern Stone Age and Bronze Age; and in this connection it is to be remarked that some negro races have even risen to the use of iron.

But we are not concerned with these more minute distinctions. For our purpose we may regard all these races as *one*, and point out as their common characteristic the universal incapacity to organise human life in communities on the one hand, while on the other hand there is the lack of all understanding of chronology, and therefore there is no permanent tradition and no history. In the tribal life of such people there is an almost entire lack of any cultivation which depends upon conscious effort and forethought. Through the natural connections between families and kindred large, loosely united communities are formed; we have a tribal life

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here in its rudest beginning, communities which arise in one period and disappear in the next without leaving a trace. In Africa there are huge tribes which disperse almost as soon as they are formed. Corresponding to this we find numberless languages and dialects which constantly merge into each other. Even the negro States of North Africa, which stand highest in the stage of civilisation of all these peoples, have this fluctuating and temporary character. But above everything, this type of tribal life lacks the characteristic which gives to human communities such great support, namely, historical tradition, which descends from grandfather to father and then to son. The basis of such tradition is lacking—namely, chronology. The mightiest means of preserving tradition, writing, does not exist in any sense worthy the name. Thus there is no history, no past, no carefully collected experience. The life of such beings is as a ship driven about on the boundless ocean, a boat without a rudder. It is like wandering about with a dim light in profound darkness; only a tiny part round the man is lit up, all in front of him and all behind him there are immeasurable depths of darkness. In the vast spaces round about him, in the eternal, meaningless point of time, man lives out his little life. He does not know the past, he cannot comprehend

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the future; he lives in the moment, entirely dependent on the chances of the moment.

At this stage of civilisation therefore, man lives essentially according to nature. Consciously, he does not yet separate himself from surrounding nature. It is only the communal life, historical tradition, and the capacity obtained through historical experience to shape one's own life free and consciously that create the individual life of man and the feeling of his difference from the surrounding world. To this life in accordance with nature belongs a peculiarity found in all thought of uncivilised men. The human being considers all things from his point of view, and projects himself and his life into all things. He illustrates everything by analogies with his own life. He believes that every one experiences his feelings, thinks and acts as he does. The difference between men and the animal is not felt. At this epoch the sagas, the fairy tales and fables were evolved, in which man appears on a level with the animals. Men are depicted as descended from animals; animals change into men, and men into animals. Animals talk. To the negroes the ass is only dumb out of idleness; the Arab speaks to his horse as to a friend; the Red Indians believe that magicians are to be found among animals as well as among men.

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The natives of Borneo believe that tigers have a sultan over them. In the fairy tales the snakes have their king and their queen. This removal of all barriers and distinctions between men and animals is carried still farther. The trees are living creatures similar to men; they speak, they sing, they bleed. Men are descended from trees, they spring forth from the trees; thus the Kaffir race, the Hereros, tell us of a tree which gives birth to men, and according to another legend of the Kaffirs man sprang from the reeds. Even the difference between animate and inanimate objects disappears, especially in the case of things which possess movement. The rivers and streams are living, animate things. We are told that the negroes round Lake Tanganyika implore the white men, when a storm is threatening and the lake rages, to lie down in the boat, because the lake cannot bear the sight of them. The savage sees and hears in the currents and cataracts of a river mischievous demons who lie in wait for their victims. Men are changed into stones, and stones transform themselves into men. The Zulus look upon the rainbow as an evil monster that kidnaps children. But what is specially to be noticed above everything else is this, that the savage has no understanding of the connection between things. He constantly confuses

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cause and effect, and, owing to his defective observation, he connects things which have absolutely nothing to do with each other. A curious example of this is seen in the reverence paid by so many peoples to the harbinger of spring. Thus, among the Finns the cuckoo is regarded as a sacred bird; this is quite natural, for when the cuckoo calls the flowers begin to bloom, the trees and bushes to put on their livery of green, and spring appears in the land. Man says to himself: "The cuckoo is a magic bird, who with his cry brings spring into the world." Similarly the Mexicans and the Indian tribes reverence the kolibri because his coming coincides with the coming of spring. The Egyptian's worship of the ibis rests on the fact that it makes its appearance at the same time as the Nile rises.

This whole mode of thought in which man mingles his own life with the life around him without any accurate observation is described by the term "animism," and this animism is justly considered the spiritual foundation of the religion of the savage.

What form now will his religion take, in accordance with these ideas? We said before that religion rests upon fear of the more or less unknown powers which everywhere surround the existence of man, giving life or bringing

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death, blessing, threatening dangers, friendly or hostile. We also said that this unknown world of strange powers begins very soon for the human being. His own world is narrow and limited; the unknown world which surrounds him, and threatens him at every step with dangers, represents to him a world full of spirits, greater, lesser, or very insignificant. He has as yet no conception of uniformity, of cause and effect; he sees and traces everywhere the workings of the lesser powers which he regards as spirits possessed of capacities analogous to his own, sometimes more powerful, sometimes less, but even more incalculable, more capricious, more wonderful, than those of the human being. With the exception of the comparatively few objects which the daily necessities or the modest needs of the household bring under a commonplace consideration, all things and all events are clothed in a mysterious dimness, and in this false light Nature appears to him as a great house of spirits, and the course of Nature as an undisciplined, mischievous and often wild and horrible sport of the spirits.

To the savage the whole world seems full of spirits, and their influence is to be seen in small things and in large ones, in the great heavenly phenomena, in the rain, the thunder

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and the lightning, the wind and the storm. Spirits dwell in the spring and in the stream, in the tree and in the bush, in the rock, and even in the mountain. The spirits of ancestors live in animals, the snakes especially being considered as their abode. Spirits may conceal themselves in the most insignificant of inanimate objects—in a stone, for example, which, breaking away from the cliff, kills a man. This is not the work of Nature but of an evil spirit that dwells therein. A negro who ran a crooked nail into his foot ascribed this misfortune, not to his carelessness or to chance, but to a spiteful demon lurking in the nail. Especially everything that is unusual, strange, striking, and unexpected attracts the religious attention of the savage. Thunder and lightning, of all the heavenly phenomena, impress him most. Among nearly all savages the eclipse of the moon and its ever varying light, its rising and its setting, is accompanied by religious ceremonies and customs. Sudden, inexplicable drought and its concomitant aridity, illness, and especially illness with violent symptoms, sudden and violent death, are all regarded as caused by the working of spirits. Animals of curious and rare habits and behaviour—as, for example, the snake—and still more such as have extraor-

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dinary powers, stones and other inanimate objects of specially striking forms, attract the religious attention of the savage, and foster the belief that these are the abodes of spirits.

We must now consider the choice which the savage makes, amid these innumerable spirits, of one as a special object of religious veneration. For in truth this universal belief in spirits, this fear of ghostly presences surrounding life, is not really religion. Religion only arises when there is choice, when man enters into a definite, though unsystematic and fleeting, relationship with one or several of many spirits. Here it must be observed that men at this stage prefer to enter into relationship with the lower spirits. Most of the negro races recognise a powerful heavenly being, a god (there is no need to suppose that this is the result of European influences), that is to say, a giver of life, Heaven—not yet divided into different Divine forms—which gives rain and life, which storms and blows, and with his eyes (sun, moon, and stars) looks down upon the earth. But at the same time as this religious idea is to be perceived among the negroes, it must be observed that there is no (or scarcely any) religious veneration of the God of heaven. The negro is convinced that that Being does not trouble

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about him, and that He cannot be influenced in His impartial goodness by the prayers of the creature. Or he thinks that He has given the government of the world to the lower spirits, or that this highest God is only for the white men and not for the black races. The negro gives his worship and his veneration to the inferior, smaller spirits, to fetiches, and to the spirits of ancestors. The same remark applies to the Malay-Polynesian race. An Almighty God is there recognised, and He is honoured in myth as the Creator of the world, but there is little trace of a worship of this high God, the living religion being a worship of spirits and ancestors.

The religious veneration which arises in this way is stamped with the character of chance and change. Arbitrary and haphazard is the choice of the gods who are to be specially venerated, who are preferred on the ground of some experience or other, some naïve observations, some caprice, or chance occurrences. Tradition and custom naturally play a part in this matter, but they are continually interfered with by individual feeling. Fluctuating, wavering, and constantly varied, yet in essentials curiously uniform, and even monotonous, are the forms which this worship takes. In the simplest possible way gifts are offered;

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they are hung on the sacred tree, thrown into the spring or into the river; they are placed on the graves of the dead, of the ancestors. Again, the benefits asked of the spirits are of the most elementary and material kind—life, health, recovery from sickness, rain, fertility of the fields, excellent hunting, many children. It is at this stage that religion, if ever, is a private concern of the individual. It is true that there are indeed high and mighty spirits which a whole community of human beings—the family, the clan or the tribe—venerates as protectors; but of far greater real significance are the lesser spirits, under whose protection each individual or each family feels itself to be. Among a large number of negro tribes the belief holds that each negro has his own particular protecting spirit. Further, each negro has his special fetich or fetiches, and he watches over his property with zealous care, keeping such entirely to himself. Hence at this stage religion is almost entirely lacking in any moral element. The idea of co-operation between human beings plays scarcely any part in such a religion; everything in it is based on bare use, on the purely material needs of the ego. Man gives so that he may receive; he offers sacrifices for earthly benefits, and he expects that advantage and benefit will be

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the direct result. If the worship of a spirit gives no tangible advantage he transfers his worship to another spirit. No moral bond unites the spirit and his worshipper; the spirits themselves are never conceived as moral beings. They are considered as neither good nor bad, although fear often predominates over reverence; rather are they without any definite character, but are capricious, wonderful, strange, and favourably inclined towards those who understand how to deal with their wondrous ways and doings.

From this chaos, enormously rich in details, and equally poor in any creative power, two or three concrete phenomena emerge. We find in the lowest stage of religious life fetichism and magic, and in a higher stage, which makes for progress, reverence for the dead and the worship of ancestors.

Fetichism prevails almost entirely among the majority of people and tribes belonging to the negro race. *Feitiçio* is a Portuguese word, meaning "the thing that is made." The term "fetichism" implies the worship of small, insignificant objects which are of absolutely no value in themselves; they are worshipped by the savages on the supposition that in them there is a spirit which lives and works as the soul works in the body of man. Fetichism is on the one

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hand to be differentiated from Nature-worship (*i.e.*, the worship of natural objects), by the insignificance and smallness of the objects, and the lack of reason for worshipping them. The worship of a mighty tree, of a spring, of a river, is not to be called fetichism because in so doing man is worshipping, from a certain point of view, a superior power. On the other hand, fetichism must be most clearly distinguished from idolatry. The objects of fetich worship may be without form, or with it, and fetichism, unlike idolatry, lays no stress on the image and its significance. Fetichism appears as the most baseless worship of presumably higher powers.

How does such fetich-worship originate? Fetichism has as its foundation the belief in spirits which has already been described. In accordance with this belief spirits may dwell everywhere, even in the most trifling objects. The savage, owing to some experience he has had, comes to the conclusion that a particular object is the abode of a spirit. We have already mentioned the stone which, becoming loosened from a precipice, kills a man, and the nail which the savage runs into his foot. The connection between cause and effect may be even more illusory than in these cases. The following example is well known: A savage breaks off a piece of an anchor belonging to a wrecked ship,

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and dies soon after; from this time forward the dwellers in the district worship the anchor as a fetich. Custom and tradition come in here; a fetich is handed down from father to son. Whatever may be the reason, the savage is convinced that in this particular object there dwells a living, working spirit.

The savage now enters into an intercourse with this spirit of a particularly simple kind. He takes possession of the object; he puts it in his hut, he carries it on his body. He guards this spirit—that is, this particular object—adorns it, decorates it; he offers it gifts; he feels happy, safe, and secure in his protection, especially if things have gone well with him, if he has been successful since he preserved this object. This, then, is fetich-worship.

This close connection with the spirit, however, does not generally last very long. It is based on the accidental occurrences in the savage's life. If he has been fortunate in his life since he selected a particular fetich as his guardian spirit, then his confidence in the fetich increases; if, however, this is not the case, the fetich is cast on one side, and another is put in its place. Often the negro has a whole crowd of fetiches side by side. One brings him success in love, and in bringing forth children; another accompanies him on his journeyings; a third protects him

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against illness; a fourth and fifth, perhaps, give him good luck in the chase and fruitfulness in the fields. Now and again, indeed, the relationship between a savage and his fetich may be lasting, and very touching. Daudet, in his "Jack," has depicted for us, in masterly fashion, the fidelity and piety, the implicit trust, of a negro boy for his fetich.

Even more widespread than fetich-worship, at this stage of religion, is the phenomenon of the magician. When religion is universally conceived as a belief in spirits, the teachers in religious life are naturally those who specially understand the nature and working of spirits, and know how to influence and deal with them. The fetich-men and rain-makers of the negro, the medicine-men of the Red Indian, the schamans of the Mongolian tribes, the dervishes of the Arabs, and the fakirs of the Hindoos are all similar phenomena. The magician is ever one to whom the spirits are submissive and obedient, whom the good spirits serve, and by whose exorcism the evil spirits are driven away. The means by which he works are mysterious rites, magic objects, secret exorcisms. Once again we are dwelling in a world of extraordinarily varied phenomena which can scarcely be grasped, which yet, carefully investigated, display extraordinary uniformity and likeness.

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These ideas develop into the belief that the magician stands, not merely in a peculiarly close relation to the world of spirit, but that he is in the most intimate intercourse with a spirit itself. If spirits may dwell in all possible and even lifeless objects—in stone and wood, in plants and animals—it is equally possible that a spirit of greater or lesser power may dwell in a human being, and may displace his ego or use it entirely for his own purposes. Thus the belief arises that a spirit dwells permanently, or for the time being, in a human being and endows him with wonderful magic powers—it may be of prophecy, of healing the sick, or bringing down the rain. The fetich-man, among the negroes, is not only in possession of a fetich that works marvels, but he is actually possessed of the fetich—that is, of the spirit which is in personal union with him. In connection with these ideas an extensive religious ceremonial has been evolved. The most curious, but by no means foolish, methods have been adopted to produce this indwelling of the spirit in man. The magician wanders for months and weeks in solitude; he fasts and hungers, he scourges himself and mortifies his flesh. All means are employed to produce the greatest exultation of the spiritual life of man with its consequent reaction, evinced in convulsions, and in hypnotic somnambulistic trances.

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Music plays an important part in these things. In the mad, whirling dance, to the muffled sound of the drum, to the shrill note of the cymbal or monotonous flute, in the evening, or at night by the uncanny light of torches, enveloped in the smoke of the incense, surrounded by a breathless, gazing crowd, the magician gyrates and twists about until he rages and remains in a state of highest exaltation, or, overcome with exhaustion, he foams at the mouth, and utterly collapses. Whatever he may say and do in this condition is not due to himself, but to the mighty spirit which has taken possession of him. It is evident that we are here dealing, not with entirely idle, baseless fantasies and products of the imagination, but with phenomena of man's abnormal life, with religious mania, ecstasy, frenzy. We are dealing with those mysterious, and partly incomprehensible phenomena of hypnotism, suggestion, and auto-suggestion; with somnambulistic states, the gift of clairvoyance, and with the unknown, mysterious, yet fruitful side of man's mental life. And we must remember that all these phenomena appear much more uncanny and powerful to the savages, owing to their mental condition, to their lack of all logical thought, to their childish credulity, and to their whole condition of mind, stirred to its very depths by this belief in ghosts. And because this whole

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mode of existence rests upon the actual material facts and events in man's life and co-operates with them the belief that is so begotten is all the more widespread, lasting, and ineradicable, and has lasted down to the present time.

We now turn to another form of religion, belonging to this stage, the most comprehensible and the most sympathetic—I mean the worship of the dead. No form of religion is more widespread than this. Wherever we look, even among the more enlightened tribes and religions, we discover as the basis of their development the reverence for the dead, the worship of ancestors. In the religion of the great Chinese Empire the worship of the dead is the really vital part, so vital, indeed, that it forms an almost impregnable barrier against European civilisation. It amounts almost to a certainty that the worship of the dead exists in all the religions with which we are now dealing. Indeed, there are investigators who see in this worship of the dead the origin of all religion.

This form of religion rests on a conception of human life and human nature that is very simple and very widespread. It is regarded as a matter of course that in the human body there dwells an independent vital essence—the soul. It is a curious little thing which beats and hammers so that the blood is driven through the veins; it is

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revealed in the face by the hot blood of anger; it is the source of our thoughts, our resolutions, our acts. In dreams it works quite independently; it leaves the human body and wanders through wide districts and sees wonderful things. It is a tiny, delicate, tender being, scarce visible, yet by no means formless, for the savage has not the slightest idea of a *spiritual* being. It has, however, only a gossamer, delicate corporeal form. It vanishes with the last breath of the dying man. It is itself a breath, a wind, a shadow, a ghost. Races of the most diverse kinds describe it by names which include and explain such ideas.

When death comes to man the body decays, but —and the belief is universal—the soul never dies. It merely escapes and continues its own shadowy existence. Often in dreams, sometimes indeed when they are awake, at the cross-road, in solitary places in the darkness, people have seen the dead in their original form, and what one actually sees must be real. The soul is said to remain near the body, it hovers round the grave. It may depart thence, but it gladly returns thither once more. Hence it is the custom to leave in the tombs a small hole through which the soul may enter and depart. Such apertures are to be found in many dolmen, especially in India and the Caucasus. Often the

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ideal prevails that the soul passes away with the decay of the body, and thus the widespread custom of embalming and mummifying the body arose. The dead body is afforded all possible means of preservation in order to guarantee the preservation of the life of the soul. This belief is especially strong among the Egyptians.

So man surrounds the souls of the dead with religious fear and veneration, for the souls are now spirits. With this idea is intermingled the primal feeling of religion—terror, fear of the unknown. These dead live in an unknown world, invisible to the majority of men. It may be that they will once again become corporealised, and in the form of an animal, especially in the form of the mysterious and wonderful snake, they will meet their descendants. A huntsman who was cutting his way through a thicket in the wood suddenly and unexpectedly encountered the form of an animal with distinctive features who looked at him searchingly and calmly. The huntsman believed from this time forward that in this form he had seen his ancestor. But whether the dead are only visible as souls hovering round the grave at the hour of spirits, or whether they assume a corporeal form, they act with mysterious powers. And

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although they are in many ways dependent on the living they are yet more powerful—or at least powerful in quite another way—than man in his bodily form. The dead demand their rights: woe to the man who breaks his given word to the dead! With invisible, incorporeal hands the dead obtain what is due to them. Gerhard Hauptman in a striking manner has illustrated this idea in his "Fuhrmann Henschel." The feeling of connection and relationship between the dead and the living is likewise aroused: the dead belong to us and we to them. The dead desire and demand from their descendants pious care, in return for which they afford friendly protection.

In the worship of the dead one aspect specially predominates—the feeling of horror of the mysterious and the strange, fear and anguish and a striving to get free of the mysterious world. Many aspects of this religion of the dead, and especially of the worship of tombs, indicate nothing more than the perpetual guarding against the dead so that they may not return and do any harm. Among the negroes of South Africa it is the custom when a chief dies to break up the whole camp, journey farther afield, and not to return till after an interval of years. They fear the spirit that haunts the place. It is a long time before any one ventures to enter the

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hut of the dead man; sometimes, indeed, no one dares to do this, for the hut is his property and he would revenge himself on those who unrighteously entered. Through Central and South Africa traces are found of huge heaps of stones, marking probably the journey of a race (the Hottentots?) who gradually pressed southwards. To this very day it remains the custom for the passer-by to cast a stone on to these stone heaps, and this act is interpreted as a religious rite to protect oneself against the dead. These heaps of stones were originally burial-places; the stone is thrown to render the return of the dead difficult, or it may be symbolic of the cessation of all relations between the dead and the living. In this respect the old Indian rite of burial is especially interesting. Here already the custom of corpse burning prevails; the ashes of the burnt corpse are then buried near the hut or the village. "I scatter the earth upon thee; may no harm come to me who have cast this clod." Intimately connected with this ceremony is a second holy act—that of the removal of the dead away from the living. After a certain time—it is believed that by now the strength of the dead man has vanished—the remains are dug up and removed to a distance. The mound of burial is erected at a place where the village is no longer visible, far away from

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the path, so that the dead may never find his way back. Those who have performed this ceremony return to the village, taking precautions of various kinds so that the return of the dead man shall be rendered quite impossible, "The living," so they say, "have separated themselves from the dead; to-day our appeal to the gods was blessed. Forward we go to the dance and the merriment, long life granted to us." This widespread custom of corpse burning appears originally to have been the main idea of the rite of protection against the dead. By burning the corpse it is hoped to drive away as quickly as possible all that is horrible connected with the decaying body, all fear of ghosts; the pure flame that ascends to heaven takes everything away with it, and frees man from that overwhelming terror of ghosts. Such rites as the above mentioned have not yet died away. With superstitious fear the survivors make quite sure that the dead man is carried out of the door feet forwards, for otherwise he might return. The windows, which until now were open, are shut as soon as the coffin has left the house. Deep down in the heart of man, and ineradicable, lies this fear of spectres.

But it is not fear alone that connects the living with the dead; the feelings of kindredship and of piety exert their influence. Gifts

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are sacrificed to the dead because they need them. They are in need of much, those poor souls. They need nourishment and clothing in their new life. They feel cold, they are hungry and thirsty, consequently food and drink are given them. The offering of something to drink is especially popular, for in so doing the fiction that the dead sip up the drink can be best maintained. The sacrifice is offered in the simplest manner: the water is poured into an already prepared hole, leading into a subterranean channel into which the liquid flows. The ancient Egyptians built in their burial-places in front of the actual burial-chamber, and connected with it by a small opening, a room in which offerings of food and drink and other gifts were placed. The Red Indian, in accordance with the generations which he honours in his so-called ancestral sacrifice, cuts three furrows in his fields, and then places sacrificial lumps of food in the furrows, and bowing in pious prayer, he calls upon his fathers. Then he takes away the puddings, firmly convinced that the spirits have enjoyed the food. The whole tribe gathers together around the grave after the burial, and also on the solemn anniversaries to partake, in common with the dead, of a solemn meal. Among most peoples the dead have their solemn day once a year;

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then they leave their tombs and seek the abodes of the living, demanding gifts. Food is placed in front of every house for them, clothes are given, the tombs are adorned. Finally, a friendly appeal is made to the dead that they shall now depart from the living again. This corresponds to the Greek δύραζε Κῆρες—"Out of the doors, you souls of the dead"; and the savage takes a broom and cleanses the dwelling of the spirits. The Persian Frawardigan Feast, the Greek Anthester Feasts, the German Feast of the Dead, All Souls' Day—these and many other festivals bear an extraordinary likeness to one another.

It is not, however, only piety that speaks in these customs: the dead *demand* sacrifices. They may show themselves revengeful and spiteful if they are not treated with consideration. And they reward those who care for them with rich gifts. Yet piety, reverence, and love do show themselves in all these rites and ceremonies, so that the worship of the dead is of high value, in spite of the chaotic mixture of superstition and egoism which belongs to it. Man's glance is cast over an invisible world; the fate of human life, circumscribed by birth and death, is unveiled. The worship of the dead links closely one generation to another; the son remembers his departed father, and in

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turn his son will show him the same regard. The whole family gathers round the grave, and in honouring the common ancestor the family develops into a tribe.

The organisation of the tribe stands midway between the more or less unorganised life of the savage and that of life on a national basis. The tribal life is an ever fluctuating organisation the peculiarities of which are very difficult to understand and characterise. Data concerning tribal life are naturally to be found on all sides, especially among the so-called uncivilised peoples. We find very great differences here with regard to the greater or less permanence of the organisation and to the degree of civilisation attained. The history of religion now affords us many definite distinguishing marks. We are only right in speaking of an organised tribal life when religion, conquering the lower egoistic forms of belief in spirits, becomes the predominant interest of the community, and lends to the community a firmer structure and a closer co-operation. The best examples of such a tribal religion are afforded to us by the Semitic tribes of Upper Asia. In dealing with this subject we must take into consideration the traces of that old tribal life which we find in the New Testament, with the many scattered references to old Jewish civilisation. Our know-

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ledge of Arab life before Mohammed, as well as the life of the majority of Arab tribes to-day who have degenerated from the high degree of culture of the age of Mohammed and his successors to the tribal stage, must all be taken into consideration. Certain similar examples of a lower stage are shown us in the tribal life of the North American Indians, and we must not forget the stagnant, torpid civilisation of the old States of Central and South America.

Genuine tribal life is to be distinguished from national life, a higher stage, by its fixed central idea, that of blood-relationship. Not, indeed, that the large tribes consist of blood-relations, or that they grew out of the family. In all probability the tribe arose from the union of various families. Yet, in spite of this, the principle of blood-relationship is firmly held.

Admission into the tribe is admission into the community of blood. This community of blood is regarded as something concrete and material. In the blood, according to the widespread idea, is the life; blood in common signifies life in common. According to this view an artificial establishment of the blood-relationship is possible. All the ceremonies connected with the brotherhood of blood rest on these ideas. Let it be assumed that a stranger approaches a tribe and requests admission into it. Sup-

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posing this is granted him, he must swear brotherhood to the chief or some other member of the tribe. They open a vein in their bodies, and drink of each other's blood as it streams forth. Now the same blood, the same life, flows in each body—they are blood-relations. And in doing this act the newcomer has become a blood-relation of the whole tribe; often, indeed, he actually swears brotherhood to each member of the tribe. An animal sacred to the tribe is then slaughtered, of which all partake in common, the importance of the ceremony depending on participation in the animal's blood. Thus, in similar sacred meals, it is often the custom to have the meat uncooked, raw, and eaten in its own blood.

As this community of life rests on community of blood, so the fundamental law of this common life is the absolute holding sacred of this common life in each individual member of the tribe. The idea is all for each, each for the other. The highest law of the tribe is blood-revenge. It is considered the absolute and unconditional duty of the tribe to answer for the life of the individual, and to avenge the injured and murdered man in accordance with the law of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." The permanent condition, therefore, of tribal life is one of

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blood-feud. If a member of a clan or of a tribe is killed by some one not belonging to the tribe, it is considered the bounden duty of the tribe to avenge the death of its member by the slaughter of the murderer or a member of his family. Revenge for this murder is undertaken by the adherents of the other tribe. Thus the ball is set rolling until the tribes have been decimated and practically killed off. The law of blood-feud retards all development of the tribes towards a national life. Wherever there has been any development conflict with this blood-feud and a discontinuance of this horrible custom have been an absolute necessity.

Very characteristic is the form that religion assumes at this stage. We see at once signs of decided progress. In the tribal life reverence for common gods or for one universal God predominates. Religion ceases to be a private matter, although naturally private worship still exists, to a greater or less extent, side by side with this common worship. As at the earlier stage, belief in spirits and fetiches, reverence for magic and amulets, especially the worship of ancestors in the form of the whole family, still play their part. But the interest in a common belief prevails more and more. The choice of the objects of veneration is no longer

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entirely left to chance, to the individual arbitrary will.

Belief becomes traditional, now and then even historical, and, to a certain extent, veneration is directed towards the higher powers. And here we reach a definite point of development. The solitary savage regards the higher powers with dull astonishment and shy fear. How can he possibly think that these powers are for him? In the tribal life the religious capacity of the human mind develops. The tribe finds in the common belief in higher powers the basis of its life.

Thus at this stage of civilisation we already find adoration of heaven and the stars clearly marked. The moon and the sun, the powers of illumination, which give light and life, are adored above all others, and of these the moon has the preference. The moon seems the more wonderful planet, for does it not pierce the night with its light? Uncivilised man does not yet know that the light of day proceeds from the sun. To him the moon possesses the most peculiar and arbitrary movements; it vanishes and reappears, it dies and lives again. The oldest chronology is based on its changes and on its course. Thus the moon-divinity is held in greater esteem than the sun-god, and in many languages, German among the number,

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to the moon is given the manly character, to the sun only the feminine one. In innumerable cases the god of the winds and the stars, and above all, the god of the tempest, is worshipped. It is believed by many that Jahwe, the God of Israel, was originally a wind and storm God. Most widespread of all is the worship of the heavenly God—that is, of Heaven itself—which is not regarded as consisting of the many powers mentioned above, but as a single powerful being, that thunders and lightens, rains and storms, illumines and darkens. The well-known similarity of names—Djaus Pitar (among the Red Indians), Zeus, Ju-piter, Tius (among the Germanic tribes)—is clear evidence that the Indo-Germanic race before its separation into different tribes had a common possession in the worship of the God of heaven. Reverence was specially paid—at least in the religions of the Semitic tribes with which we are so familiar—to the gods of the earth. The worship of the gods of the earth who gave fertility to the land was especially strong in the nomadic Syriac-Arabic tribes of the desert. Let us picture to ourselves a nomadic tribe on its journey. Far away to the horizon stretches the sandy desert in terrible uniformity; no trace of life is to be seen. The sun casts its burning rays perpendicularly; the fine sand

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penetrates through the traveller's pores. Men and animals are nearly exhausted. Suddenly an extraordinary change takes place. Far on the horizon tall trees are to be seen, the earth gradually changes its appearance, and is more and more clothed in green. Nearer and nearer does man approach, and soon he stands beneath the shadow of tall palms. Springs gush forth and bubble and give the longed-for moisture, everywhere a luxurious vegetation covers the earth. It is a contrast as of life and death. Who has created this wondrous life in the middle of the desert? The wondrous powers of the earth; and, full of reverence, the nomads worship the powers which have used their influence on this spot. They like to think of these gods as feminine, and they worship the mighty Mother Earth. Baal and Astarte of the Canaanitish and Phœnician tribes were originally gods of fertility and of the earth. Here we observe a curious combination of the gods of fertility with quite other gods. Under the earth there are—at least according to a very widespread idea, which owing to fire burial has never entirely died away—the dead. These tribes with whom we are dealing like to think of the community of the dead as organised, having as their chiefs gods of the dead, more or less to be feared. These

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divinities of the dead are often combined with the gods of fruitfulness. This is clearly seen in the Greek mythology. Demeter, Persephone, Pluto all possess this double character of the god of the lower world, and of fertility and harvest.

On the whole the tribe worships but a small number of gods. The life of the tribe is essentially uniform, and but few gods are needed. The life of the tribe is extremely simple, it has not yet been divided into various departments; and thus it is concerned with just a few great necessities. A few gods are sufficient for their needs. It happens, then, that a tribe perhaps has only one god, but naturally this is no form of monotheism. The same tribe to-morrow may have two gods. The gods of the other tribes are considered just as much gods as the particular tribe's own gods. Very frequently the divinity is differentiated into a manly and a womanly form. Baal and Astarte are worshipped side by side.

The relation of the tribe to its god is a thoroughly natural one. The ruling principle here is the natural relationship—blood-relationship. The god has given life to the tribe; it is the father or mother in the literal sense. Often, indeed, simple ancestor worship is the basis of the tribal religion, and this appears to be combined in a curious fashion with the

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worship of the higher powers. It is said that in the beginning of time the heavenly powers wandered on earth in human form, and left behind them descendants, the ancestors of the tribe; and we have also the manifold legends of men sprung from the earth. The earliest ancestors of a tribe, of a nation, are said to originate from Mother Earth herself. This worship of ancestors and of tribal heroes assumes in a lower stage of tribal life a very curious form, to which only passing reference can be made here. Very often we find in this connection that the belief indicates that the original ancestor of the tribe was some animal who had married the tribal mother who is regarded as of human origin. According to this we must suppose that this belief originated at a period when the gulf between man and animal was not considered insurmountable by the universal consensus of opinion, and when it was still believed that a spirit might become materialised in the form of an animal (see page 49). The fact that the original father is represented under a strange form, while the mother is human, shows that the source of these ideas is to be traced to the period of the matriarchate, when connection with the mother and not with the father constituted relationship and adherence. The result of such

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a belief is that the whole class of animal in whose form the original ancestor of the tribe appeared is regarded as sacred and inviolable. The best examples of this curious belief, which is known as Totemism, are to be found among the North American tribes, but it is believed that Totemism is also to be found among the Semitic tribes. Many well-known legends—especially the legends relating to the transformation of Zeus into an animal and his marriage, as well as perhaps the Romulus-Remus story—point to Totemism.

Many curious forms of worship based on the idea of blood relationship are found at this stage of human life. As the connection with the Godhead rests on blood-relationship, so the object of worship is often the renewal and restoration of this relationship. For this relationship may easily be broken or loosened by the guilt of the tribe or the anger of the god, and therefore the god and the tribe must once more cement their blood-union. Perhaps a sacred animal is sacrificed to the god; a portion of the blood is poured on to the altar, and this the god drinks, the rest is drunk by the tribe, and now once more the same blood flows in the veins of the god and the tribe. A very instructive example, lying close at hand, that of the covenantal sacrifice, is given in the

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second book of Moses (ch. xxiv. 1–8). Moses, after the sacrifice of the animal, poured a portion of blood on to the altar, the rest he sprinkled over the people. It is due to the aversion to using blood that here the blood is no longer drunk, it is only sprinkled. And it is explicitly stated that it is the blood of the covenant. From henceforth the sacrifice comes to be regarded, it may be said, as a sacramental meal, when the tribe and the Godhead are bound together in intimate, closest connection. The Mexican religion is especially rich in elaborate rites of this kind, in which human sacrifice and cannibalism form an integral part. It is quite natural that here human sacrifice should be considered an especially sacred sacrifice. The Mexican religious observances included so many of these horrible sacramental meals that the Spaniards, on getting to know of these practices, spoke of them as blasphemous imitations of the Holy Sacrament, inspired by the devil. The truth, however, seems to be that the same religious impulse, that longing for an intimate and, if possible, a bodily union with the Godhead, which is displayed at this stage in so naked a fashion, is seen later in a purer form in the Catholic idea of the Sacrament, which enjoys a very widespread belief.

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The gods are now the protectors of the tribal life: it is their own life which they are protecting, and the tribe's destruction would be their destruction. Thus they are the protectors and guardians of the blood-revenge and the blood-feud. In the later national belief of the Greeks we clearly perceive the consciousness that the old, gloomy gods of night, whose rule is broken by the Olympian gods of light, were the upholders of inflexible justice and the blood-feud. Readers will recollect the figures of the Eumenides and the Erinyes, the revengeful deities who pursue the murderer. "They attach themselves to the soles of his feet, the terrible powers of the night."

In their character of protectors of the life of the tribe the gods are, above everything else, gods of war. Jahwe's original sanctuary, the Ark of the Covenant, shows Him as the God who leads the Israelitish tribes to battles and wars. Finally the tribal gods are the givers of all fertility to the land. They are specially remembered at the joyful harvest festival, the tribute due to them is gladly paid; the tribesman feels bound body and soul to his god. Among the Semitic tribes the god is simply called Lord, Lady, King, Queen. The phenomenon of simple absorption in the Godhead now develops into horrible human

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sacrifice, especially in the form of the sacrifice of children, and of prostitution. We have already spoken of human sacrifice in the Mexican religion; the custom of sacrificing children to Moloch existed down to Jeremiah's time. Among the North African Punic tribes who had wandered there from Phœnicia human sacrifice played a very important part even in the time of Hamilcar and Hannibal. As late as the second century A.D. Tertullian mentions human sacrifice in North Africa. Prostitution in the service of the Canaanitish-Syrian Astarte was customary. In the ancient law of Hammurabi we find both these phenomena, the consecrated virgin and the consecrated prostitute.

We have already wandered a good distance. Already we see that the religious life is striving after higher forms, that a common faith is rising above the arbitrary thoughts and fantasies of the individual. Religion is becoming a matter of the community, is indeed the basis of human communities. In this common belief men turn to the higher powers. The religious life is no longer the scene of human egoism. A moral impulse is evolved which indeed is only seen as very confined and restricted in the tribal life; still, the moral idea begins to exist. The feeling of the one for the other

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and all for the one, of the one for the whole, arouses the perception of positive obligation. It is true this idea appears in horrible forms—in blood-vengeance and blood-feuds, in human sacrifice and prostitution. But yet, the feeling of absolute worship springs into life; the Godhead has power—complete, kingly power. Man must obey it.

We have wandered far, but we are still very far from having reached the heights.

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CHAPTER III

NATIONAL RELIGIONS

NATIONAL life is created by the union of different tribes. Thus Babylon took the lead of the city communities of the Babylonian plain, and the Babylonian Empire arose. In Egypt the separate districts and provinces were merged into the one empire; and under the leadership of Moses the tribes of Israel became a nation. Mohammed compelled the Bedouin Arabs to become a national unity. In the transition from the tribal life to the national life the fiction of blood-relationship and blood-unity, on which tribal life is based vanishes. The fundamental law of blood-revenge and blood-feud which has hitherto obtained is replaced by the idea of regulated justice. No longer does the clan, the family, avenge the murder of one of its members: those in authority, acting in the interest of the whole community, guard the inviolability of the law, and the idea of public justice arises.

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New links in the common life are forged: a great expansion of the idea of life in the community takes place. The nation takes over the management of a large number of matters which concern the whole community. Division of labour begins; the separate occupations—those of the soldier, the peasant, the artisan—become now distinct. Fighting still remains a most important occupation of the communal life, but it is not the only important one. There are also the works of peace—industry, trade, mighty buildings, undertaken by the many, the beginnings of art, regulations for the administration of justice, social institutions. The nation experiences a history in common, and an attempt is made to fix this history in the memory, at least in rough outline. The art of chronology arises, the art of writing is developed in its most elementary form; the events of the past, the great deeds of ancestors handed down chiefly in an oral form, mostly in song, or already written, cement more firmly the common life. The moral, personal, historical relation now enters into the life of man in the community in place of the merely natural one.

To this new stage of civilisation corresponds a new kind of religion. A large number of quite definite, characteristic, national religions now rise before our sight. We distinguish, in

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the first place, the religions of stagnant civilisations—those of the old States of Mexico and Peru and of Egypt, and the old original religions of China and Japan; then, in the second place, the religions of the progressive nations—such as those belonging to the Semitic and Indo-Germanic race. To the former belong the religions of Babylon and Assyria, the ancient Israelitish and Phœnician religion, the religions of the ancient Hindoos; to the latter the religions of the Persians, of the Greeks, the Romans, the Slavs, and the Germanic tribes. We will endeavour, first of all, to set forth some common characteristics of this religion based on national life.

I. To the manifold and varied aspects of life at this stage corresponds the variety of large characteristic idols. The basis of national life is the basis of polytheism. In various ways and from various motives Polytheism is developed. The separate tribes and districts which unite to form one nation and one country bring their tribal deities with them. While in the one case there is unity of national life, in the other there is plurality of gods. The Babylonian and Egyptian idols, which can almost all be localised, afford excellent examples. Thus the Babylonian seaport Eridu was the place of worship of the idol Ea, the town of Nipur

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of Bel, the town of Ur of the Moon-god Sin. The sun (Shamas) was especially worshipped in Sippar, a Marduk in Babylon, Nebo in Borsippa. The gods increased in power with the increase in power of the individual towns, and finally formed themselves into a pantheon under the rule of Marduk, the god of Babylon. In precisely the same way the great Egyptian deities were originally local deities. Ptah was the deity of Memphis, Ra of On Heliopolis, Ammon of Thebes, Thoth of Hermopolis, Osiris of Abydos, and so on. The amalgamation of the tribes is often shown by the fact that the gods enter into a relationship with each other. The idea of the trinity of the father, mother and son (or daughter) was especially pleasing at this stage of civilisation. Thus the Egyptian Mut, the goddess of a district near Thebes, becomes the spouse of the great Ammon of Thebes, and Mentu, the god of a neighbouring district, is their son. In Babylon there is the trinity of Sin (the moon), Shamas (the sun), and Ishtar, or father, mother and daughter. The god of the most important tribe among those that are forming a union, the divinity of a town which succeeds in gaining precedence, is regarded as the presiding deity. Just as, one after another, the towns of Memphis, Heliopolis, and Thebes

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gained the mastery, so in the same order Ptah, Ra, and Ammon obtained precedence among the gods. With the rise of Babylon Marduk, the hitherto entirely insignificant local divinity of Babylon, rose to be the most important god in the Babylonian Pantheon; with the rise of Athens, Athene became the chief goddess of the Greeks, and Apollo stepped into great power as the protecting deity of the Delian confederations.

A second impulse to polytheism was the diversity, ever growing greater, of life on a national basis, and this impulse is generally a somewhat later manifestation than the one already mentioned. When the remembrance fades away that the hierarchy of gods originated in the divinities of individual tribes and towns, separate provinces of the national life are assigned to the separate gods according to their character. The divinity of the conquering tribe remains the god of war, and probably the god of the conquered tribe is considered the god of shepherd and peasant life. Side by side with the gods of the firmly established cities which are advancing in civilisation stands the divinity of the subject people who pay tribute—the god of herds and fields. The Greek tribes and towns, most of whose gods were apparently the common property of the Hellenic tribes

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before the disruption, carried this principle of the division of labour among the gods into every single department of life. But indeed we find the same principle everywhere. Thus there are deities of war, gods of the fields, of agriculture, and of the herds—and even indeed special gods for the different kinds of herds—gods of towns, of civilisation, of industry and handiwork, of art, of the council, of wisdom, of justice, gods of trade and navigation and so forth, gods who protect travellers and strangers, gods of civilisation, and, above all, gods of the arts of writing and speaking. Near the gods of the living stand the gods of the dead, the rulers of the underworld. The dead as well as the living form an organised empire, though indeed a shadowy one, and this kingdom of the dead has its ruler.

The gods who exercise the greatest influence in men's belief thus unite the most varied qualities and activities and develop into complicated individualities. I may mention the Babylonian Marduk, the Indian Varuna, Ahura of the Persians, the Egyptian Osiris, Zeus, Apollo, Athene.

This multitude of gods forms a kingdom of the gods at the head of which there is a supreme god or several mighty gods. The best examples of such kingdoms are afforded us by Babylon,

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Egypt, Greece, and by the people of ancient India, by the Persian and by the Germanic tribes.

II. Gradually the gods develop into personalities; they are now endowed with moral worth, not, naturally, moral worth in our sense, in the highest sense of the word; nevertheless it is moral worth. This is seen most clearly in the fact that from this time forward a more or less sharp distinction is made between gods and demons. The gods may be severe, stern, horrible, gloomy, but they are worthy of worship; the ἦθος is in them, they have a characteristic demeanour, a conscious individual will. On the other hand, the demons are evil spirits of a lower nature, intent on mischief, on destruction and annihilation. Man worships the gods, and finds in them his ideals; for example, the Indian war god, delighting in battle, ever quarrelling, often drunk, intent on love intrigues, yet embodies the ideal of the Hindoo warrior caste. The demons, on the other hand, are hated, and man flies from them. Sacrifice is offered to them, but not worship; the sacrificial food is flung to these monsters in the same way as food is thrown to the dogs and the wild animals. The distinction that is made between the belief in spirits of a lower nature and the worship of gods with some moral qualities, and the aversion

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of evil spirits and demons marks a distinct progress in the religious life of men.

Now the gods begin to be gradually released from their original destiny. Originally nearly all the gods stood in clear relation to the great powers of Nature. But in the process of development this limited relationship falls into the background or is completely forgotten, and in its place a manifold relation to human life exists. Marduk, at first the god of light and the sun, then the god of the city of Babylon, becomes the god of the Babylonian empire, the creative god who has created an ordered world out of chaos. The Hindoo Varuna—it is not known whether, originally, he was the Divinity of the heavens or of the moon—becomes the almighty god who with his great eyes watches over morals, justice, and order. Ahura, the Persian god of heaven, becomes the god of civilisation, in whose service man tends the herds, rises from a nomadic life to a settled life, builds roads, makes bridges, founds towns, wages war against barbaric hordes, destroys wild and harmful animals, and practises faithfulness and truth towards his neighbours. We shall see later how in the prophetic religion of ancient Israel the belief in Jahwe, the War God and the national God, developed, and how in the Greek religion the figures of the heavenly gods

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Zeus and Apollo (whose original significance —was it, perhaps, the God of Light, or of the herds?—is not quite clear) rose into prominence.

III. It is in connection with this development that the gods received names. In the earlier stages they had no particular names, or at least no individual names. Their names merely expressed their original import (thus Sin the moon, Shamas the sun, Urania the heavens, Gaia the earth); or their relation to men, as we see in the names of the Canaanitish-Phœnician gods Baal [Adon], Baalath, which correspond to Lord, and in Moloch, Milkom, Melkarth, forms of "king." But now the gods receive proper names. Through long use and corruption the names lose their obvious meaning. In earlier times the natural object and the god which were originally identical were described by one and the same word; now either the god or the object receives another name. A distinguished scholar has observed very rightly that where this process of transformation takes place very quickly the gods are given on this account a specially distinguished place in the religion. Only persons have proper names, and only gods whose names are no longer intelligible, and no longer reflect their original import, become personalities.

IV. It is at this stage of development likewise

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that the gods assume definite forms. In the national religion the image plays an important part; indeed, the image represents an advance in the development of religious life. The right view of images has been obstructed largely owing to the aversion with which the Old and the New Testaments regard the worship of images. People forget that the men of the Old and New Testaments—Jeremiah, the second Isaiah, Paul—were engaged in actual warfare with lower forms of religion, and were, therefore, not capable of an impartial historic judgment. We must make it perfectly clear to ourselves that the image is not a fetich, although for the great mass of people it may have this meaning (just as the holy pictures assume this significance to Catholic peasants) but merely a symbol; the image is not the god who is to be worshipped, but merely its representation. Wherever the image is set up there the god will be present. The god is by no means present everywhere; but here in this particular place man may call upon him; here he will grant help and show favour. We can trace the origin of the image from its rudest beginning. In the earliest ages a simple, unhewn stone, a rough piece of wood which was set up, represented the Godhead. The story of Jacob illustrates this transition period with unmistakable clearness.

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Jacob in a dream saw the heavens open, and God and His messengers ascending and descending. When he awoke he cried out: "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." Then he set up a stone and anointed it with oil and called the spot Beth-el, the house of God. In this way the image was evolved. These stones, with the rough pieces of wood which were placed near the altar to represent the Godhead, played a clearly recognisable part in the service of the God of Israel as depicted in the Old Testament. Then a step farther in advance was taken; the stone or piece of wood was provided with a face, then with very rough arms and legs, and now the idol is finished. To this stage of civilisation belongs the Hermes of ancient Greece, whose rough, unshapely form called forth the scorn of Alcibiades.

The Godhead has been represented in the image in many varied forms. The image has not by any means always been in the form of the human figure. The more the strange and the uncanny predominates in the Godhead in the lower stages of religion, the more often the image assumes the form of an animal. The worship of the Godhead in the form of a bull, derived from the Canaanitish worship of Baal, penetrated even into the ancient Israelitish

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worship of Jahwe. The stage reached by religions may be estimated according to the form taken by the image of the Godhead. Those peoples who are at a low stage of civilisation or have remained stagnant represent the Godhead in the form of an animal. The animal character of the gods is quite clearly visible in the Canaanitish-Phœnician, the Mexican, and Egyptian religions. To these succeed the periods of transition. There arise hybrid forms, half man, half animal; the Egyptian religion affords us many examples of these forms. The goddess Isis has the head of a cow, Anubis the head of a jackal, Horus the head of a sparrow-hawk, Typhon an ass's head, and so on. In the Babylonian religion we have advanced a step farther. Here the people like to represent the gods as riding or driving the animals by which they were once represented. In many cases, indeed, the animal that so often appears by the side of the Godhead, as its symbol and attribute, was originally the ancient form which the Godhead took. The Greek religion affords many examples of this.

It was long before man rose to the idea of the human form in its noblest manifestation as the representative of the Godhead. The artistic means were lacking. In Babylon superhuman colossal figures were employed to express

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the sublimity of the Godhead. One religion alone reached the highest stage: the Greek religion, in union with Art, created in the course of centuries of labour the figures of Greek gods—human figures such as had never walked on this earth; human figures which, through their luminous beauty, their inner nobility, and their dignified bearing, were able to arouse religious devotion. Freed from all earthly stain, raised above earthly sorrow, without flaw or blemish, magnificent types of strong, perfect manhood, noblest womanhood, and maidenhood, these gods stood before the Greek man and woman, who bowed down before them.

The significance of the image cannot be highly enough estimated. The human community was grouped around the image. In the Old Testament we are told that when Gideon conquered the Midianites he had an image made from his share of the booty, and thereby won for his house importance and authority in Israel—for a few generations only, it is true. When the people of Dan journeyed forth to find a new home, they forced a man from the mountains of Ephraim to go with them, as he had possession of an image. A tribe must have an image and a priest, if its common life is to be firmly organised. On the other hand, the image contributes enormously to

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the personal concrete idea of the god. When from the multitude of nameless, formless, inconceivable, impersonal spirits living, concrete, personal forms of gods appear, it is to the image that this development is chiefly due.

V. As a necessary consequence the image requires a temple. The period of national religions is the period of temple-worship. For a very long time the worship of the Godhead was not connected with the temple. God was worshipped in the open air. The Germans, who, owing to lack of artistic capability, did not cultivate the worship of images, boasted that they worshipped their gods in sacred groves. The worship on the hills and mountains described in the Old Testament was widely spread. There on the heights the worshipper felt near to the Godhead, who was thought to dwell in the heavens. If there were no hills then artificial ones were made. The Teocalli of the Mexicans are simply terraces, artificially made hills, on the top of which stands the altar to the Godhead. Again, the so-called Babylonian towers are nothing but artificial mounds, turreted stone terraces of enormous compass. Only where the image has become the prevailing custom does the temple arise, at first often only a little house, a chapel, perhaps only an open shrine,

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which originally was intended for the reception of the image. Thus on the Babylonian terraces, at the highest point, was erected a little chapel, a little tower, as the abode of the god. The plans of most of the great temples show very clearly that they arose from the little room containing the image which was preserved in nearly all of them as the holiest part. Gradually the other parts of the temple were developed; a larger hall was built in front of that little room, to which the worshippers of the god—perhaps, indeed, only the priests—had entrance; forecourts with great contrivances for sacrifice were joined on and enclosed the room of the sanctuary. And now the design for the temple, as we see it in the ancient Israelitish temple with its Holiest of Holies, its Holy Place, and its courts, is finished.

VI. A priesthood gathers round the image and the temple; the service of the god becomes more complicated. The care of the image, its cleansing and decoration, the various kinds of sacrifice, the maintenance of order in the temple, the preservation of the temple buildings—all these require much technical knowledge. Thus the priesthood is evolved. Whilst in the earlier stages of religion leadership may fall to anyone who shows his capacity and is able to evoke the belief that he is in intimate

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intercourse with the spirits, the priesthood is not the business of every man. The priest occupies an office: he is an official. It is not for anyone who likes to take upon himself an office; it must be entrusted to him by the community. Preparation is required for the priesthood, capacity won through long years of exertion. The priests form an organised class, but at the same time the priest is generally only the agent of the community or of the temporal ruler of a community. It is accepted as a matter of course that the community, and especially the head of it, has the right of direct intercourse with the gods; the priest is only appointed as a deputy for an appointed time, or for life, because such an arrangement facilitates intercourse. This idea appears still to have remained even when the right of being a priest was restricted to certain families. On the other hand, the priesthood easily developed into a closed caste, a guild complete in itself, which completely usurped the right of intercourse with the god, and laid claim to be the mediator between the Godhead and the rest of the people—that is, the laity. This happened more especially where the life of the people was retrogressive or stagnant. In Assyria and Babylon, in ancient Israel, in Greece, and in Rome, the priests, on

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the whole, with a few isolated exceptions, remained the deputies of the community, the nation, or the king. On the other hand, the Egyptian, the ancient Hindoo, the later Persian, and the later Jewish religions show us examples of the contrary. History warns us, how a priesthood, especially in the case of a people who are no longer capable of resistance, may absorb everything, like a sponge, and deprive them of all power of freshness.

VII. The definite concrete idea of individual figures of gods corresponds to the predominance of the myth. What is a myth? A narrative concerning the gods. When there is personal knowledge of a god stories are told about him, stories of his deeds and his sufferings, of his relation to his believers. And thus stories about the gods dominate the imagination of the worshippers. Such myths have often become quite incomprehensible, mere fables; often they reflect with absolute clearness the original nature of the god, sometimes they are of the so-called etiological kind. Sometimes they may explain a mysterious appellation of the god, and why he is worshipped precisely at this spot, and precisely in this form. Let us imagine for a moment a Nature-myth; one of the prettiest examples takes the form of the storm-myth. The people say, with simple imagination, the

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clouds are cows, heavenly cows which bestow the life-giving moisture of the rain. Now it is the middle of summer, and for weeks together it has not rained. The earth is thirsting for rain. Then man says to himself, "The cows have gone away, where are they? A demon must have driven them away, he keeps them hidden in prison. But the mighty God can help." Already in the distance on the horizon lightning is seen. God brandishes his weapons to free the cows from the demon. The dull roar of the demon is heard, but God conquers. The cows have returned, they cover the heavens in great herds, and give forth the longed for moisture of the rain. This is a myth. An example of a myth relating to worship is the well-known story of the fight of Apollo with the dragon. In Delphi the sanctuary of Apollo arose over the original oracle-seat of the prophesying earth-demon Python. The myth of Delphi relates how the radiant God of Light, Apollo, had conquered and killed the evil dragon-god, from whose snares he had escaped at his birth, and had erected his own sanctuary over the dragon's grave. Thus the myth puts life into the figures of the gods and their worship.

VIII. Parallel with this development of the belief in the higher gods is the disappearance of the belief in the lower spirits. The lower spirits

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become generally demons, who are feared but no longer worshipped (see p. 75). Intercourse with them, magic, conjurations are regarded as uncanny, not permissible, and even as a crime. The loftier, stronger, and purer that the belief in the gods becomes, the more does this intercourse with spooks and spirits tend to disappear, and the old faith in spirits becomes superstition. Especially is this the case with the belief in the power of the dead. It is just the most energetic and progressive religions which have not preserved this worship of the dead, or have given little thought to it. The conviction arises that the dead are of no importance to the living; they do not return, these dead; the shadows dwell in a distant place, they have drunk of Lethe and forgotten what goes on in the world. Very rarely, and quite as an exception, does any one return from the under-world. The fire-burial would appear to have been a powerful instrument in freeing men from the fear of the dead. Sacrifices are no longer made to the dead, neither is there any more belief in the power of spirits. Wherever the memory of the dead is honoured or their graves adorned, this is done out of a feeling of piety, even though the majority of people have not yet ceased to believe in spirits and to worship the dead. The intensity of this process of enlightenment is

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naturally different in the different religions. The Greek religion had freed itself in the time of Homer. In the Babylonian religion, from very ancient times, there was a firm belief in the ethereal nature of the dead; the under-world was regarded as a place of shadows and of dust. In the prophetic religion of Israel intercourse with the dead and conjurations of the dead were considered a crime. And so completely was this thinking about the world of the dead laid aside, that for centuries the Israelite religion was incapable of developing higher thoughts of compensation in a future world. In other religions, notably in the Egyptian, the relation between religion and the grave and the future life was held with great intensity.

IX. By freeing religion from a belief in spirits and the worship of the dead a further specific moral advance was rendered possible, at least here and there. Men no longer believed, or believed far less, in the influence of the dead on the living and on their destiny. On the contrary, the belief begins to spring up that the fate of man after death depends on his own deeds in this world. This advance does not take place in those religions which, in their struggle against the belief in spirits and the worship of the dead, have reduced the dead to a shadowy and dream-like existence. But it is so in the other reli-

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gions. Imagination begins to distinguish the distant places where the dead dwell. So long as people thought of the dead as being in the neighbourhood of the grave and connected with the body resting in the grave such a classification could not take place. Only when people imagined the dead as gathered together in distant places could the idea arise that some dwell in the better and best places, others in the dreadful haunts of pain and torment. The imagination of the Indo-Germanic races, the Greeks, the Teutons, the Persians, the people of India, has specially developed this idea. With the Egyptians the idea of the future life is bound up in the grave and the embalmed corpse. But even this shows development. It must be admitted that the belief that man's fate after death depends on his own acts in this world cannot be called really moral in our sense of the word. In many instances, in accordance with the prevalent ideas, it is the rich, the important and the powerful, to whom the better places in the future world are assigned. The brave warriors who fall in battle are, in the belief of the old German tribes, carried by the Walkyrie to Walhalla. The cowardly, the idle, who die in their beds, sink down into hell. Very often the sins which are punished in the future world are ceremonial offences, insults to the Godhead.

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The great sinners of the Greek lower world, Tantalus, Sisyphus, were offenders against the Godhead. Menelaus, on account of his semi-Divine origin, was sent to the Isles of the Blessed. Quite early there arose in the Greek religion the belief, which later was to play a most important part, that human beings could secure for themselves a favourable fate in the lower world by all manner of rites, curious acts, and mysterious formulæ. Although the moral thought is hidden and covered over by all kinds of veils, yet the belief that man's fate in the other world depends upon his acts in this one is of very great import. It will only be seen in its purity and its full significance in the higher stages of religious life.

Before we form an estimate of religion based on national life, we will illustrate by two concrete examples what has just been said. From the large number of religions we choose for our purpose the Babylonian and the Greek.

It would appear that the origin of human civilisation is to be found in the Babylonian plain. The inscriptions and monuments of this ancient civilised people permit us to look back, with astonishment, into the fourth and even perhaps the fifth century before the Christian era. From the end of the third century B.C. we have preserved for us—it ha

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only lately been discovered — the law of Hammurabi, the founder of the world-empire of Babylon (about 2250). This code of laws shows a very high degree of civilisation and of judicial progress, and its definitions have aroused the delight and astonishment of modern jurists. From the middle of the second century cuneiform inscriptions on seals which have been found among the ruins of Tel-Amarna tell us that at that period the Babylonian speech, writing, and civilisation were the speech and civilisation of the whole world.

The religion of this ancient civilised people was polytheism. The Babylonian Pantheon, as it had developed at the time when, according to the Old Testament, Abraham lived, was carefully graded and arranged. At the head stood the Trinity—Anu, the god of the high heavens, Bel, the god of the air and the surface of the earth, Ea, the god of the sea and the depth of the earth. Belief in these was already beginning to wane; a certain theological speculation is already implied in comparing the gods in this fashion.

The life-giving, or it may be the life-destroying, heavenly powers were chiefly worshipped. The majority of Babylonian gods were originally sun-gods—the young, victorious, life-giving spring sun, who dispersed the

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clouds and the mist. Marduk, the god of the spring sun, was especially honoured, as was likewise the scorching, burning sun Nergal, who brought death in his wake, and was the war-god and god of the lower world. By the side of the sun-god stood the moon-god, Sin—which in earlier times asserted its superiority—also the god of the storm (Ramman). The goddess of life, Ishtar, was the only important goddess of the Babylonian Pantheon. We meet with her constantly in a vague twofold form. In the north, in Assyria, she is depicted as the austere virgin goddess, the fighter and goddess of battles; in the south the wild Ishtar is worshipped, the mother of all life, the unspeakably evil goddess from whose bosom life springs forth, who brings abundant fertility and strength; she is the wild courtesan, infatuated with man, who revenges herself spitefully on those who do not obey her will. She is honoured by festivals of the greatest splendour; in her service prostitution is sanctified. A myth of profound significance relates the story of her journey to the world of the dead. Her lover Tammuz, the youthful god of spring vegetation, is dead, and the goddess hastens after him to the lower world. She must seek the spring of life to rescue her beloved. At each door of the lower world—

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there are seven—she casts off a garment and appears naked before the powerful queen of the lower world, who keeps her a prisoner. Then all life fades away from the earth till a messenger of the gods frees Ishtar. The original meaning of the myth is clear. It is an etiological myth of the year. It provides an answer to the question why in winter (and in the time of drought in summer) all nature is dead. The answer is because the mother of life has gone away. Why has she gone away? To seek her beloved, and so on. But new thoughts are connected with this old myth; life springs from death, there are gods who can call forth life from the dead.

The most sublime figure in the Babylonian Pantheon is that of **Marduk**. Originally, apparently, the god of the spring sun, and then the divinity of the city of Babylon, he becomes with the extension of the Babylonian rule the mightiest god of the Babylonian world-empire. As ruler of the Babylonian world-empire he becomes the ruler of the world, before whom, every year, the lot of man is cast over heaven and earth. He is, however, more than the world-ruler: he is also the world-creator. He is probably the first god whom a devout multitude acknowledged as "almighty god, creator of heaven and earth."

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We still possess this old Babylonian myth of creation. It is preserved for us in many scattered fragments of cuneiform inscriptions. This myth of creation in its origin and significance is quite clear: it is an extended spring-myth. In the spring the Babylonian of the plain sees the victorious struggle of the spring sun with the clouds, mist, and rain which cover the land and make all activity and trade impossible. He sees how the god with his radiant shafts of light pierces through and annihilates the mist-monster. The Babylonian, who was the first to sing of the myth of creation, conceived the beginning of the world as the beginning of the year. As it is at the beginning of the new year, so it was at the beginning of the world, only on a much larger scale. The story runs thus: At the beginning a fearful water demon ruled in the world with his accomplices. No one could withstand him; trembling, the gods stood in awe before him. Then they all gathered together and determined that Marduk should be their ruler. Anu, Bel, Ea, the ancient gods, delivered their power into his hands; he must conquer Tiâmat, the water-monster. The god now arms himself with a trident and a net in which he shuts up the winds. In a terrible combat he overcomes the monster; he plunges his trident into his mouth,

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drives the winds into the open jaws, and the monster bursts. From the two halves of Tiâmat's body which he has cleft asunder Marduk creates heaven and earth. We see in this story clear evidence of man's observation of the sun, which disperses the mist and the clouds.

It is in this way that the idea of the creation of the world arose in the Babylonian religion. Although it is the result of deep reflection, and therefore comparatively late in making its appearance in the history of religion, this belief in God as the Creator is of the highest value. With special trust man obeys the God from whose act and will all being and living, his own life indeed, are derived. For he knows of a surety that what this God has created He will preserve and protect.

The relation of man to the Godhead in the Babylonian religion is that of complete subjection. The gods are despots and lords of boundless power; the basis of their character is power, superhuman power. Their statues are colossal, far greater than those of men; their servants and attendants are mighty, enormous, such as the colossal figures of the winged bull and the lions, and of the winged spirits which were placed before the temple and the palace as guardians. Mounds were raised in their

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honour, and the ruins of these quaint temples convey the idea of hills of considerable heights. In silent humility and subjection man bowed low in the dust. The feeling of anguish, of eternal fear of the gods, is clearly marked.

This feeling is strikingly expressed in a whole series of literary forms. A great many hymns and songs have come down to us, in which the believers acknowledge their sins, and implore the god to show mercy. These have been collected under the name of the Babylonian Penitential Psalms. These songs show very clearly how that feeling of nameless terror grew out of the belief in spirits which belongs to a lower stage of civilisation, out of the agonised consciousness that man, through his deeds and his omissions, provokes the anger of the known and unknown gods which surround him. A whole host of spirits and gods are entreated in these litanies to show mercy; the unknown god and the unknown goddess are not omitted, and the believer asks pardon for his hidden and unconscious sins. Completely downcast, the believer draws near to his god:

"I, thy servant, full of sighs, call upon Thee,
I am a sinner, whose ardent entreaty Thou wilt accept;
Like the doves do I moan, I am o'ercome with sighing,
With lamentation and groaning my spirit is downcast."

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He acknowledges his sins to the God. "I will tell thee of my acts which yet cannot be told." "Lord, my sins are many, great are my misdeeds." This idea is specially striking in the following psalm:

"Oh, Lord, Thy servant, cast him not away,
Plunged in the flood, stretch forth Thy hand.
The sin which I have committed, transform by Thy grace!
The ill deeds I have done, let the winds carry away!

"Rend my sins, like a garment!
My God, my sins are unto seven times seven.
Forgive my iniquities!"

These psalms remind us in every way of the Old Testament psalms. A connection between them cannot be denied. It is quite possible that the Israelitish psalmists were influenced by the Babylonian penitential poetry, especially with regard to the whole idea of penance and sin, as well as in many details. But a closer consideration shows us a great difference. Only the very best of the Babylonian penance psalms are equal to the Old Testament psalms. Only by such a comparison does one perceive how admirably, and with what originality, the genius of the religion of Israel has made use of this rough material furnished from a foreign source.

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By modern writers the Babylonian sense of religion has been greatly exaggerated. Scholars who, as a result of long, self-denying labour, have from the hidden monuments obtained some idea of this astounding kingdom, and of the extent and permanence of the Babylonian world-civilisation and its enormous influence in the ancient East, are naturally inclined to over-estimate the newly-found discoveries. They assign to the Babylonian nation such an important place in the development of religion that, compared with it, the significance of Israel and of the Old Testament religion seems to grow pale. They can bring forward many apparent proofs in support of this view; they may say that investigation of the ancient Babylonian religion has taught us in many respects to recognise the original source from which the religion of Israel sprang. The stories in the first book of Moses, the story of Creation, of the Flood, the story of the Fall of the angels, perhaps (or apparently) the story of Paradise, although there are no actual proofs here, are transformed versions of the Babylonian myths—versions which certainly embody an entirely different and a far higher religious significance. The code of laws of Hammurabi from the point of view of civil and legal matters

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shows the manifold relations between Babylon and Israel. Regarded in this way, the Jewish legislation has in many points new light cast upon it, while our knowledge of Israelitish temples and temple-worship is increased by the excavations of Babylonian temples. The Sabbath itself may have come to Israel from Babylon.

This may all be willingly granted, and yet the prophetic religion of Israel remains immeasurably superior. The Babylonian religion does not stand on the same high plane as the religion of Israel, to which reference will be made in the next paragraph. Hence it is really impossible to make a comparison between the two religions. What the religion of Israel did borrow from the Babylonian was the raw material which now received its consummation and form. The prophets of Israel are said to be the spiritual scholars of Babylon; this is the same as saying that the sculptor stands in a spiritual relation to the quarryman.

The Babylonian religion belongs to the stage of national polytheism. Whatever traces of monotheistic belief are said to have been found are limited to the speculative and fruitless wisdom of priests or to the learned ideas of modern investigators. It may be said

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that practically monotheism never existed in Babylon, and we look in vain for any traces of prophetic personalities. The last King of Babylon, Nabonidus, attempted reform in the direction of monotheism. He had the sanctuaries of all the gods placed together; he tried to make them entirely subject to Marduk, and their places of worship offshoots of the temple of Marduk. Thus at the very end of this stage of civilisation we see how far removed man was from real monotheism. The Babylonian religion shows other limitations and compromises. We do not refer to the fact that the thought of the future world and of retribution after death had scarcely arisen, for this limitation it possessed in common with the ancient religion of Israel. But the Babylonian polytheism was never able to suppress the belief in spirits, which belongs to a lower civilisation, and in the whole chaotic world of magic and witchcraft, which belongs to the lowest stage of all. The enormous mass of literature dealing with magic is characteristic of the religious literature of Babylon. "They cover the earth like grass" may be said of the spirits and demons of that period. Babylon remains for later ages a vast mass of beliefs in demons and magic. On the other hand, priestly and

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learned speculations spread over the Babylonian religion. Babylon was the original home of the so-called science of astrology, and of all the superstitious beliefs which connected the fate of man with the stars.

This must not, however, prevent us from recognising the attractive features of this religion. It possessed an enormous seriousness, a mighty power. The ruined mounds of the Babylonian plain testify to this. The belief in God stands forth here in its victorious power; in the dust man bows before the God. The feeling of sin and the terror of sin are displayed here in a striking and almost profound form.

Let us now cast a glance at the Greek religion. It stands indisputably highest among the national religions, and affords the most striking example of a national life permeated through and through with religion. How the life of religion beats through the rich, multiform body of Greek civilisation, and how religion is everywhere here the art which the national life expresses in its most perfect form!

To make this quite clear, we must transplant ourselves for a moment to Athenian life in home and city, say, in the middle of the

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fifth century, when religious life, owing to the Persian Wars, had taken a new step in advance. We approach an important Greek house through the courtyard, where Zeus Herkaios, the protector of the court, presides. His altar stands in the centre, and here the master of the house slays animals. All slaughter of animals is a holy act. Here the lord renders justice to his subordinates. To the altar the stranger approaches, and in the name of Zeus Xenios, the protector of strangers, requests a hospitable reception. By the door of the house stands a sacrificial vessel in which are placed offerings as a protection against the spectral-goddess Hekate, who is not worshipped by such sacrifices, but simply kept at a distance. In the atrium is the hearth where the fire ever burns, where the goddess Hestia is the presiding deity. She greets whoever comes into the house. The family gathers round the hearth; "the extinction of the fire is the extinction of the family." At every meal the goddess Hestia is remembered by pious offerings. As the stranger passes out into the road again he encounters the antique, hideous statue of Hermes. This god accompanies the wanderer into strange countries; he protects the lord of the house in his travels, and guides him safely back to his

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beloved home. In the market-place Zeus Agoraios is the ruler, and in his name decrees are made, officials chosen, and the lot cast. Apollo and Athene dispose of justice on the Areopagus. And over the town, high on the Acropolis, gleam and shimmer the dwelling-places of the gods. All artistic thought and talent are employed in the service of the gods; the theatre is the worship of God, and a festive yet solemn multitude, after the sacrifice has been offered, listen to the solemn sounds of Æschylus's profound and deeply religious wisdom. Far into the distant world Athens' ships carry the glory of Pallas Athene, and over the Greek city confederation watches Apollo, the god of unity.

To complete this picture we must call to mind the figures of two Greek gods, those of Zeus and Apollo. The former has been described by the hand of a master: "From Zeus spring day and night; he scatters the years. His radiant eyes are full of significance; he sees everything, his eye never sleeps. He is thus the searcher, the all-seeing one; the sinner is said to bring disgrace to the sacred eyes of Zeus. The summits of the mountains are his holy places of worship; he is enthroned on the illumined Olympian height, high above the wreath of

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clouds. In the middle of each court his altar stands; house and farm as well as the city-state are placed in his hands. He protects those who go beyond the boundaries of the fatherland and seek help in foreign parts; he accompanies the wanderer to his journey's end. He is the supreme saviour and sanctifier. He establishes marriages, knits and preserves the bonds of relationship; life and death are in his hands, and on golden scales he weighs the mortal destiny of the fighters. He bestows blessing and riches, he protects the boundaries. The kingly power and its symbol, the sceptre, come from him. He guards and preserves oaths, from him spring fidelity and belief, and wherever right is downtrodden on earth, he utters once more his decrees. . . . Severely does he punish unjust judgments, and he likewise sees to the punishment of every crime. He enters everything in his mighty account so that nothing can ever be forgotten."

By the side of Zeus we may place Apollo. Let us imagine ourselves once again in Athens, in the fifth century B.C., in the theatre. A solemn festive crowd is gathered together; the last part of the great trilogy of Æschylus, the "Eumenides," is being performed. In the background is a representation of Apollo's temple at Delphi. The great doors of the temple open,

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disclosing in the centre the blood-stained matricide Orestes, at the altar of Apollo, imploring protection. Round him sleep and snort terrible forms, more horrible than Gorgons, and harpies, "black and repulsive to look upon." "Their appearance is too ghastly for even gods, much less men, to approach their dwelling. Never have I seen before such creatures." They lie in wait for the murderer of his mother, who has fallen to them for revenge. Then, magnificently radiant, the pitying Apollo approaches the curse-laden stranger with a blessing:

> "Thee will I not betray, to thee aye true;
> Near to protect, yet from thee far removed,
> No grace nor favour will I show to those
> Who hate thee."

And Apollo tears his *protégé* from the grasp of the horrible forms, which utter hoarse curses. Belief in the pitying, forgiving god, in Apollo, the saviour and seer, may well have been kindled to the highest degree of fervour in the heart of many an Athenian at such a performance.

It is a rich, many-coloured picture which we have sought to paint, this domain of national polytheism. We are conscious of broken rays of a Divine nature which shine into the hearts

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of men; broken rays certainly, but rays of Divine majesty and glory, of Divine goodness and charity. The figures of Zeus, Apollo, Athene, Marduk, the Hindoo Varuna, and the Persian Ahura, whom we shall meet again when we reach a higher stage of civilisation, may stand as the highest symbols of human belief at this stage of religious life. Among them all the Greek gods shine forth as ideals of noblest humanity. Already this belief has a high moral power and significance. A loftier conception of human life clings around it, through it man wins for himself permanent human dignity. The belief in gods becomes the foundation of the life in common, and lends power to it.

At this point there may be an inclination to make various objections; people will point to the things which are low, base, and morally repulsive in the myths and worship of the gods, which are to be found everywhere, side by side with what is noble and splendid. Certainly we must not overlook these objections. The morality which is unfolded in the worship of the gods is not in all points—only indeed in a very few points—the highest morality or morality at all in our sense. The same may be asserted of the religion of ancient Israel before the time of the prophets. What a frightful

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morality is that of ancient Israel in many ways! Israel compelled by God's command to extirpate and slaughter a whole conquered people in the most horrible manner! King Saul rejected because he would not slay his heroic opponent, King Agag, at the command of the prophet! With what delight are all the tricks of cunning and deceit by which Jacob harmed his people described in the Old Testament! It would be absolutely unreasonable to try to set up here a standard of the highest morality. It would be unfair not to see that the barbaric slaughter of a whole tribe was a necessity in order to preserve a superior people in their strength and their peculiar characteristics—a barbaric and horrible necessity. But if we are to set up this standard of equitable judgment with regard to parts of the Old Testament, and to the morality and piety of ancient Israel, we must also apply the same reasonable judgment to other nations and their religions.

We do not see here, indeed, our morality, but —setting aside, of course, corruptions and blemishes, the manifold relics of a ruder time and a ruder faith, as well as the signs of coming decadence—it is morality, morality progressing and developing. We have here the evolution of life in a community, the strengthening of the feeling of unconditional duty for which man

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was ready to stake his life, ascent from step to step.

Let us consider likewise the limitations of these national religions; the divine forms often completely disappear in human life, and they lose their commanding and elevating power and significance. Religion and property become the same thing in the national life. Religion begins to lack the progressive, critical, and revolutionary elements; its powers are restricted, it becomes only too quickly a conservative power, fixed in its usages and customs, the best support of the ruling authorities in the life of the people and the states, the enemy of all progress, a tremendous force which threatens to divide the nations absolutely and profoundly one from the other.

A further progress in the development of the religious life must now take place in which the union between religion and the nation is to a certain extent shattered. This disruption must proceed from the individual; the figures of the great prophet-reformers are now to appear on the scene.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHETS AND THE RELIGION OF THE PROPHETS

ONCE more we will bring clearly forward the condition of religious life at the stage we have now reached. Religion is a concern of the nation; it is the centre of a nation's life. The gods belong to the nation, the nation to its gods. Religion has become a custom, a usage, a tradition; man is born into a religion. The religion of a man is just as little a matter of free will and conviction as love of his country is. It is no question of belief and disbelief, of acceptance and denial. Just as traitors are put to death, so those who deny religion are outlawed. Disbelief in the gods is treason, is sin worthy of death.

Religion, we say, is a concern of the nation; only in a secondary degree is it the concern of the individual. Attention is only indirectly turned towards the individual, and that generally when he is the leader and chief of the

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community. The fresher and more spontaneous the national life is the less important is the individual. For what, indeed, is the individual? A wave that vanishes, a drop in the bucket, a shadow; he would be completely abandoned and powerless without his people. The individuals, the generations, pass away into the kingdom of the shades, of the dust, of hell. "The dead cannot praise thee, O Jahwe!" New generations appear; they delight in the light and the air, in the sun and the spring, in the blessing of children, and in riches, in war, in victory, and in peace, and they wander far afield. The individuals vanish, the peoples remain, the gods are eternal.

There are exceptions, however; now and again belief in retribution after death arises, and here the individual plays an important part, but there is much uncertainty and doubt concerning this belief. There were all kinds of fantastic beliefs cherished by secret sects and conventicles, intermingled with extraordinary rites and ceremonies. In the schools of the priests in Egypt, in the curious Orphic societies of Greece, this belief was held, but it was seldom comprehended in its universality. It was often only concerned with the noble, the strong, the important, the brave; it acted as a threat for the very wicked, as a consolation to

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the adherents of the sects which indulged in extraordinary usages and ceremonies. Thus this belief was not the central point of the religion, it remained on the circumference; in many religions, the Semitic especially, it hardly appeared at all. It played the most important part in a decaying religion, the Egyptian religion.

The eye of the gods rests, as we have already pointed out, here and there on the individual, on the distinguished, the strong, the noble. The kings of Babylon and Assyria felt themselves specially connected with the Godhead; they were the favourites of the gods, their representatives on earth, the administrators of God's favours. The history of the people in the East is often simply the history of the king. The Greek religion has many stories of the favourites of the gods, of the heroes who ascend to Olympus, of the heroes of Divine descent. The gods receive them personally and carry them after their death to the Elysian fields. But these are exceptions. Even the powerful and the great are not safe from the anger of the gods; human greatness is the sport of the gods. This is the fundamental idea of the classical Greek tragedy.

One more point demands notice. National religions are all religions of worship. The

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religious act is an act of worship. Piety means honouring the gods in a manner sanctioned by custom and usage. Religion certainly stands also related to morality and to the duties of a national life. In war a man sacrifices himself for his fatherland and his gods. The gods watch over public and private rights; with pure heart and clean hands must man draw near to the gods. But still, the centre of religious life is worship. Sins against the worship of the gods, ritualistic and ceremonial sins, are punished most severely; and, on the other hand, the sacrifice offered in the right fashion covers a multitude of sins. The gods are easily propitiated by sacrifice. The Babylonian epic of the Flood naïvely tells how the terrible Bel, who intended to destroy mankind, was propitiated by the sacrifice of the surviving heroes of the Flood, and how the gods all gathered round the smoke of the sacrifice like flies round carrion. And the first book of Moses relates how the scent of Noah's sacrifice ascended to the nostrils of Jehovah. Morality exists in the religion, but it is hidden in ceremonial observances, entirely entangled and enchained in the rites of worship.

Now, about this time the religious life of mankind received a new impulse in very different parts of the world. We have come to the age of the prophets. The date of the

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great new moral ideas in religion may probably be assigned to the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C. In the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. the great prophets appeared in Israel; perhaps at the same time, perhaps considerably earlier, lived Zarathustra, the reformer of the Persian religion. In the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. a religious movement began in Greece, the exponents of which were the great tragedians, later Socrates, and above all Plato. In the sixth century B.C., again, Buddha was doing his work in India, and at the same time Confucius probably in China, though he can scarcely be included among creative reformers. It is a remarkable coincidence. It seems as if the tree of the religious life of mankind had sent forth new shoots at the same time in different places. We will try to understand the common characteristics of these phenomena which stand related to each other.

I. The first, which is common to them all, is the prominent position taken by the individual as a dominating power. Single great personalities in more or less sharply defined forms appear before us. Here we see Zarathustra and his friends, King Vistasp, Zarathustra's wife, his daughter and his son-in-law, the King's minister Jamasp; there the mighty prophets Elijah,

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Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah. In Greece there are the significant figures of Æschylus and Sophocles, Socrates and Plato; in India Buddha and a crowd of favourite young men who are specially mentioned by name. These are all concrete figures, clearly recognisable even through the dimness of tradition. And what figures they are! They are of enormous, gigantic size; they still speak to us across the centuries; we delight in them as the most precious inheritance of the past.

II. Everywhere we find the same thing. Each individual prophet protests against the judgment of the majority, against tradition, the law, custom, popular usage. Nearly all the prophets were great, solitary, tragic figures, dwelling in a solitude difficult for the boldest imagination to picture. We see Zarathustra in his solitary flights, in his fruitless missionary journeys. On the heights his god Ahura-Mazda is revealed to him, or God's angel and ambassador; in the desert the demons surround him, despise him, reject him. Indignantly he drives them away with stones; only after thirty years' hard struggle does he gain any result for his work. The life of Buddha, again, although the calmest and most peaceful of all, was full of struggles, whilst Confucius passed a great part of his life in banishment. Socrates

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emptied the cup of poison, condemned by the people as a despiser of the gods; Plato taught a few members of a society which had practically no influence on the outside world. Think also of the prophets of the Old Testament; Elijah in conflict with the priests of Baal, Amos sent into exile by the high priest, Isaiah in constant opposition to the weak kings. Greatest of them all was Jeremiah, concerning whose life it was written: "To-day I make thee a strong city and an iron pillar and a brazen wall against the whole land, the kings of Judah, the princes, the priests, and all the people."

There is a peculiar resemblance among all these men; they will accept nothing but what their own conviction and their conscience approve. They seek to get at the heart of things. In their presence deception, triviality, and nonsense vanish. They do not, indeed, announce what is merely their own conviction; they talk as the elect in the name of a Power far above them that has filled them and constrained them to utterance. The prophets of Israel speak in the name of Jehovah; the Word of Jehovah has been revealed to them, and therefore they must speak. "The lion roars, who is not afraid? Jehovah speaks, who dares be silent?" They are possessed as by a strange

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power; Jehovah's word has become theirs. It is no strange, incomprehensible, oracular saying that they utter; it is their own conviction, wonderfully given them, and firmly held. Zarathustra announced the revelation which he asserted he heard on the mountain-tops in his struggle with the demons, in strange, mysterious phrases, the form and contents of which are reflected to a certain extent in the Gathas, the oldest fragments of Persian religious literature. Buddha, under the holy tree, passed through his hour of deliverance and then his hour of temptation and battle with the evil one; then he preached the revelation that had come to him. Socrates and Plato cannot quite be classified with the prophets. With them the movement against conservatism was mainly intellectual; they had the higher truth which they revealed, and it seems they were more anxious about this than they were conscious of themselves as revealers. Yet Socrates, when he asserted the legality of man's moral thought and judgment, in opposition to the personal, arbitrary will and ideas of the sophists, invoked the spirits and the Godhead that spoke within him. Plato, indeed, was a religious genius in the mantle of a philosopher. He was the god-intoxicated seer, who, "divinely mad," looked into the world of the invisible,

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and spoke with holy enthusiasm of what he had seen there, and of what he had comprehended in his inmost soul.

These prophets exercised their influence by the Word, which means, by the weight of their personal conviction. They resorted to no other means, to no custom, usage, act, or worship. They did not stand forth as supporters of any guild or any caste. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son," Amos replied to the high priest, and thus disclaimed all connection with the schools. God had called him from the plough and sent him forth as His messenger. In the oldest records of the reforms of Zarathustra the priest plays no part, indeed he appears as the enemy of the reformer. Buddha cast aside all privileges of the priestly caste for his followers, and he himself did not belong to it. They worked only through spiritual means and the power of their personality. As a rule they neither proved nor disputed—the Greeks, of course, are an exception; they announced their beliefs with unequalled certainty and demanded the subjection of the will. And as they risked their lives and their persons, they demanded the same from their disciples. An extraordinary kingly tragedy! At this point the word "belief" or "conviction" comes into the

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province of religion, which from now appears based on personal conviction. It is rightly asserted, on the ground of the single fact that one of the kings of Medea of the seventh century was called Phraortes "the confessor," that the Zarathustrian reform had taken place earlier.

III. The revelation vouchsafed to the prophets which they announced was an absolute, decisive conviction concerning the meaning and nature of life, its deepest foundations, its highest aims. It is a very compact whole, a definite conviction which can be expressed in a few sentences; it is no longer a variegated medley of custom, usage, popular traditions, ceremonial and ritualistic demands, ecstatic observances, moral dicta. The prophets of ancient Egypt announced that the God of Israel was a God of absolute justice and holiness within the kingdom of Israel and without, a holy God who was able to destroy and annihilate His own people for righteousness' sake. Zarathustra announced the almighty God of heaven and earth as the God of human order and civilisation, the protector of all useful arts of civilisation, the enemy of all barbarism, of all evil, and of all that was unseemly. Plato comprehended the Godhead as the final highest idea, the most rational root of all existence which is seen in the good,

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the beautiful, and the true. Buddha announced that all life was misery, and the object of all life was the release from misery and the passing to eternal rest.

This ideal of the prophets was in its deepest meaning—although the inference was not immediately seen—no longer limited to one nation. The laws of Divine justice and holiness, according to the prophets, were binding, not only on Israel, but universally. The God of Holiness exercises His scourge over strange nations. To Buddha the misery of the world is a truth, true all the world over, and to the whole world Buddha announces a deliverance from misery. That the wise man —like Plato and his scholars—can rise above this confused world of reality to the eternal world of ideas is true for Greek and barbarian alike. To Zarathustra the whole world is divided into the kingdom of the good and the kingdom of the evil god, and truly pious men may everywhere promote the good works of the good god.

IV. Thus, on the above-mentioned grounds, prophetical religion becomes monotheistic religion. On this soil springs up belief in one God in heaven and on earth. To Zarathustra and his earliest followers all other gods but the one were demons. Ahura-Mazda, the

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radiant heavenly god who dispenses light, life, order, is alone God. Whatever remnant of the people's belief in gods Zarathustra kept he made strictly subordinate to the supreme God. By the side of Ahura divine beings were only permitted to remain as subject attendants, messengers, emissaries, entirely dependent on his will, radiations from his being. In opposition to this view people may point to the dual element in the Persian religion, to the belief of Parsiism, probably originated by Zarathustra himself, that there is an evil spirit (Angra-Mainyu = Ahriman) strongly opposed to the good spirit, and a kingdom of evil subject to the latter. But, in truth, this dual element in no wise reflects upon the monotheistic character of the Iranian religion; it belongs rather to the region of reflection and speculation than to that of practical worship. Religious worship is not directed towards the evil spirit, the thought of whom fades into the background whence ascend all the more radiantly and clearly love for the supreme God and trust in Him. For in the Persian religion the good god is the creative, the all-powerful god; he alone creates; the evil god can only imitate, or check, or destroy. And the final victory in the struggle between the two kingdoms even remains with the good

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god. Dualism in the Iranian religion must be considered in the same light as the belief in the devil in the Christian religion. This dualism may injure and choke monotheism, and this has often happened—one recalls the piety of the Christian Middle Ages—but it may also simply remain on the periphery of the religious life, and scarcely touch it.

To Plato and his immediate followers the unity of the Divine nature is regarded as an axiom, although he may often employ the phraseology of the old national religion. But there is here absolute variance from the polytheistic religion. Plato will not allow Homer a place in his "State" because of the latter's unworthy representation of God. Later an attempt at a compromise was made by teaching that the gods of popular belief were demons, half-human, which stood mid-way between the Godhead and man, and by manifold false allegorical interpretations of myths, of the arrangements and ceremonies employed in the worship of the popular religion, a reconciliation was made with the belief of the average man. Later Greek philosophy lacked the religious and moral power to reform and conquer the polytheistic Hellenic belief of the people. No one again trod the path of Socrates.

It is scarcely necessary to demonstrate that

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the prophets of ancient Israel were monotheistic. We shall return to this later. It is true that it is only in the later prophets that the monotheistic belief is seen in its complete form. In the preaching of the second Isaiah this development is seen to be complete; according to him all the gods of the strange nations are vain imaginings of human fancy, the worship of the gods is the worship of dead images, and belief in gods is heathenism, religious and moral wrong. Jehovah alone is the true God, the almighty Creator, and Israel His servant, the herald to the whole world of His majesty.

V. Bound up with the conception of religion as *one* in its very essence is its deliverance from all outward things and disturbances, the breaking of the bonds of custom, tradition, worship, and ceremony. The prophets announce a religion of spirit and of truth. There is no manner of doubt that Plato and his disciples were entirely free from all the outward observances of the national religion and the national ceremonies, although later the Greek idealistic philosophy capitulated to the popular belief. In the oldest records of Zarathustrian reform both sacrifice and the priesthood, as far as we know, played an insignificant part. Buddha denounced the sacred Hindoo religious writings,

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the Vedas, and all the complicated, ancient Hindoo ritual of sacrifice which rested upon them. And in doing this he destroyed the privileges of the ruling caste of the priests. The older prophets of Israel were all, or nearly all, opposed to ceremonial and the priesthood; only the later prophets from the time of Ezekiel were inclined to look with favour upon ceremony.

Before concluding, we must try to get an idea of the power and extent, the height and the significance, of the prophetical religion, by figuring to ourselves the most important phenomenon of this stage of religious life, the ancient Israelitish prophetical government in its relation to the fundamental ideas which have just been described.

First of all we must glance at the condition of the religion of ancient Israel before the ministry of the great prophets. The ancient Israelitish religion arose, as we described in the first chapter, from the Semitic tribal religion. We saw that in this old Semitic religion the number of the gods always remained limited, and that very often a tribe only worshipped one god, perhaps under a male and a female form. The ancient Israelitish religion was distinguished by its tenacious

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fidelity to the worship of one God, Jehovah of Mount Sinai. No differentiation into male and female was made. It was apparently owing to Moses that when he welded the Israelitish tribes into a nation none of the tribal gods was allowed to remain. Then when Israel conquered Canaan no change of belief, on the whole, took place. The gods of Baal belonging to the conquered tribes were not worshipped with Jehovah, although it is true that Jehovah was often worshipped under the form and name of Baal. All this did not happen without struggle and opposition. King Ahab attempted, in honour of his Syrian wife Jezebel, to introduce the worship of Baal alongside the worship of Jehovah. We see here that already the power of a religious prophetical personality of the noblest kind was exercising an influence in the religious history of Israel. Elijah fought the one in opposition to the many—for the one God of Israel. It was at this time that it was written of Jehovah, "The name of Jehovah is jealousy. He is a jealous God." The less important successors of Elijah no longer conducted the struggle with the weapons of the Spirit; by treachery and the sword they extirpated a clan cast out for its strange religious leanings. In the south, in Judea, after the destruction of the

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northern kingdom—we must here anticipate events somewhat—there was once again a powerful, heathen, polytheistic reaction under the rule of Manasseh; a feeling of mistrust, due to events, had at this time and among these people, arisen against the power of Jehovah. But the final result here also was the triumph of the pure worship of Jehovah.

Let us consider the boundaries of this world of ideas, which even one of the greatest men in the religious history of Israel scarcely overstepped. Briefly we may put it thus: What is here found is not monotheism in our sense of the word. We may perhaps give it a new name, monolatry—the service of a God. The actual worship of one God was practised by this people, and the conviction existed that Israel and Jehovah, Jehovah and Israel, were indissolubly connected. Israel must only serve Jehovah. Even King David believed that the circle of Jehovah's influence did not extend beyond Israel, and that whoever drove him out would force him to serve other gods (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). The Old Testament chroniclers relate, quite naïvely that Naaman the Syrian, after he was healed by Elijah, took with him some earth from the Holy Land, in order to erect upon it an altar to Jehovah in his own country, for Jehovah can only be worshipped on the

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soil of Palestine. Even in Deuteronomy (the fifth book of Moses) the idea is brought forward quite simply that Jehovah had entrusted the other nations to the remaining powers of heaven, and that He Himself had chosen the children of Israel alone to be His people. The ever-recurring lapses of Israel into polytheism, of which history informs us, will only be psychologically understood when we consider that no real monotheistic belief existed in the people, and that Jehovah counted as one God among others, although He was the mightiest, and, for Israel, alone of importance. The bond between Jehovah and His people was a perfectly natural one; it was a necessity of His nature for Jehovah to love His people. He could, indeed, do no otherwise; if He were to, He would not be Himself. And it is perfectly natural that Israel should worship the Lord and Owner of the land, and should reward Him with generous sacrifices for the rich gifts of His favour and goodness.

It is true there are grounds for regarding the belief in Jehovah as entirely spiritual. Jehovah was never worshipped as the actual Father of Israel; the idea rather was that He had chosen the people. The relation between Him and Israel rested on a union. By many personal acts which have become his-

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torical He had bound the people to Him; He had delivered them from Egypt and had led them through the desert. His power is not completely confined to the land of Israel; His own dwelling is Mount Sinai, and there He appears. He is a God who works wonders at a distance. Above everything else a strong moral impulse directs the religion of Israel. Jehovah is the God of righteousness, who rewards the just and punishes the unjust. But these spiritual elements in the religion of Israel are still only latent; the natural elements outweigh them.

Such was the belief of ancient Israel. Gradually the times changed; Israel no longer remained the victorious, conquering nation which stood out against its neighbours in strong superiority, or at least with equal power. From the north-east a terrible storm-cloud was gathering for Israel. A great world-empire, the Assyrian empire, which was then striving for the mastery of the world, was extending its power farther towards the west and the south. Powerless, the people fell before its destroying power, which like a whirlpool drew everything towards it. Threateningly this weather-cloud hovered on the horizon of Israel. Now and again it appeared to pass away, but it really always stayed in the sky, announcing misfor-

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tune and filling the minds of men with nameless dread. What was the attitude of Israel at that time? The majority wandered lightheartedly on the edge of the abyss. It was a period of apparent splendour and happiness, of a high standard of civilisation. Luxury and vice reigned; the crowd kept their joyous festivals with the maddest of jollities. The rich oppressed the poor, the poor grumbled under the oppression of the rich. The Court of the king was magnificent, armies of soldiers protected him. It was all as it had ever been. The superior and more lofty patriots may have gazed earnestly into the future. But the people all lived in unshaken, natural confidence in Jehovah; He could not desert His people, for then He would be denying Himself.

If no other spiritual strength had existed in the people, the religion of Israel would probably have vanished without a trace amid the confusions of the nations. Assyria would have conquered North Israel, Babylon, a century and a half later, South Israel, as dozens of other tribes were conquered, of which we now know nothing except the names. But there were higher powers at work in the religious history of Israel. The great figures of the prophets stand forth; and without these the religion of Israel would not have

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been equal to the forthcoming events; the prophets placed the people's belief on a new and higher basis. They preached something which was at that time absolutely unheard of and unexpected. They revealed a God who would destroy His people. With their clear eyes they saw the truth more and more clearly. They saw the inevitable downfall of Israel threatened by Assyria on the north, and later, by Babylon on the south. But this was in no sense a religious conception. As far as the history of religion is concerned the important work that they did was to hold fast to the belief in Jehovah. They accomplished a bold reversal of all the standards of worth. They did not see in the world-empires of Assyria and Babylon a blind, powerful fate or the power of strange gods working which destroyed Israel, its God, its belief. They pronounced boldly that it was Jehovah Himself who had destroyed His people, and that the strange kingdom was a scourge in His hand. Here we meet with in religion absolute conviction in face of apparent contradiction. These men were confronted with an abyss: "a God who destroys His own people." Yet they threw themselves into the abyss, saying, "This terrible God is our God."

Among the people they stand terribly isolated. Let us look more closely into the position.

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In the midst of a wild festival of joy Amos stepped forward with his death-lament. To him the ruin had already appeared: "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise; she is cast down upon her land, there is none to raise her up."

The people regarded him with astonishment as a madman, and the high priest, Amaziah, drove him forth: "O thou seer, go flee thee away into the land of Judah—but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el, for it is the King's sanctuary, and it is a royal house."

Again, let us think of the terrible solitude of Jeremiah; his relatives, his friends, revile him as a madman. In his native town of Anathoth he dare not be seen, for the people threaten to kill him. He is thrown into prison, into a damp, gloomy hole. All point their finger at him: "Behold the traitor!"

The prophets ever remained true to their convictions, for they knew what they had revealed; they had not invented it. It had taken possession of them, the certainty had seized them from on high. They *must* speak. "And if I say I will not make mention of him . . . then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire." They defy the whole body of the people and their convictions based on custom and tradition. They stand as great, eternal,

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shining examples for all those who, in the hard struggle with the sluggishness and the foolishness of the majority, follow their own higher, God-given conviction. "They shall return unto thee, but thou shalt not return unto them."

For it was in truth a higher belief that they represented, and it was through this belief that the natural relation between God and His people was shattered. Religion shatters the fetters of the nations. The God of the prophets is no longer a God of the one nation or the one land. He is the God who is able to destroy His people, and endures for ever in His majesty and glory. His rule is world-wide; the strange nations, even the mightiest, are all in His power, they are scourges in His hands. The day of judgment will come for proud Assyria, for Babylon, the ruler of the world. He is the ruler of the whole world. He has created this world, His is the earth and what lives thereon, and the nations are to Him as a drop in the bucket.

Thus the natural relation between God and His people is destroyed, and its place is taken by a *spiritual* bond. We have already seen how in ancient Israel the thought existed that the relation between God and His people did not rest on an entirely natural necessity, but on the free, personal choice of God, who had

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called His people out of Egypt and had formed a union with them. This idea was now seriously accepted. The relation between the God of Israel and His people was a purely moral one; He is a God of righteousness; He desires right and justice to flow from His people as from a stream. Because that is not so He rejects His people—perhaps to the very end. We read, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord thy God am holy." "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, all the world is full of His majesty."

God will not commune with His people by means of customary rites and usages. Outward observances will wrest no favours from Him. He who desires to serve Him must serve Him with his conscience, with an obedient will, with his whole life; he must serve Him with his whole heart and soul and being. The prophets have always been powerful opponents of ceremonial worship, not merely degraded forms of it, but any forms. All the great prophets—Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, at any rate at the beginning, Jeremiah, the second Isaiah—were in conflict with ceremonial worship. Only the later prophets, from the time of Ezekiel, showed any favour towards it. Jehovah, they announced, took no pleasure in bloody sacrifice and burnt sacrifice, in feasts, and new moons, and Sabbath solemnities. He had commanded

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none of these things from the fathers in the desert. His favour is not confined to worship in the Temple at Jerusalem. "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgments between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers."

The preaching of the prophets ends with a great note of interrogation. They saw before them, to the bitter end, darkness and annihilation. Yet side by side, very faintly, hopeful thoughts arise; perhaps, who could tell, the miraculous might happen! If only a remnant of Israel repented its evil ways, perhaps Jehovah would incline His heart, and would pardon the exiled adulterous Israel. Then perhaps the new age would dawn, the age of the New Covenant, when Jehovah would remove from His people their stony heart, and give them a warm heart instead. More and more emphatically was this note struck. And when Israel and Judea lay in the dust, the prophets, on the wings of the Spirit, hastened to foretell the future; they

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announced freedom and redemption. In full accord now they sang:

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. . . . The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed."

Thus the figures of the prophets of ancient Israel stand before us; solitary, mysterious, tragic figures towering high above us. The greatest among them could see in the future only darkness, sin, and ruin; the later ones, who were once more filled with hope, did not see its fruition. It was better for them that they did not see it, for they would have been bitterly disappointed. For whenever their preaching was successful, whenever their spirit touched the spirit of the people it was, one might say, no longer their spirit. All was again petrified into formulæ, and so much dust and corruption hung around the glorious revelation that it was scarcely to be recognised

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again. This was the greatest tragedy of their life and work.

And yet, it must be allowed, many of them attained their object. They saved the religion of their people, they gave it a new foundation, so that it became strong enough to survive the passing away of the particular form of national life in which the faith had originated.

For us the prophets stand as shining summits; round about them night and darkness cover the valleys and the hills. But over there glitters the light of day, the golden beams of the sun flame forth. It will be a long time before the sun, bringing light and life, will penetrate into the valleys and ravines; but nevertheless the time will come. Already the light from on high has shone upon us.

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CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIONS OF THE LAW—JUDAISM, ZOROASTRIANISM, ISLAMISM

MANY of the religions which have just been considered did not remain at the height which they reached in the age of the prophets. In the history of religion the valleys succeed the heights. The prophetical ideals became the common property of a wider circle, but the victory of the idea, its apprehension and acceptance by the people, becomes fatal to its purity. And yet a very great progress was made, which must not be misinterpreted nor undervalued. Although the ideals of the prophets no longer remained in their absolute purity, yet they exercised an ever-widening influence. For even in all their backslidings and corruptions and dealings with strange gods it was still the prophetic ideals which exercised great influence.

Now at this time there arose in the religious

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life of men transition forms, hybrid and contradictory forms: religions which, on the one hand, show a decidedly universal tendency, and yet, on the other hand, are strictly linked to the nation; monotheism, but with many polytheistic elements; religions which have advanced beyond the stage of ceremonial worship and yet give plenty of scope for such worship; a piety which shows a tendency towards the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and yet is more and more deeply steeped in outward ceremonials and traditions, in customs and usages. These religions are often described as the religions of the law; it would be more suitable to describe them as religions of observance. For custom and religious ceremony play the central part in them.

In studying the phenomena appertaining to these religions we must first of all deal with Judaism—that is, with the Jewish religion of post-prophetical times, as it shaped itself in the time of the Babylonian exile and after; and above all, with that form of Judaism as it appeared in the century before Christ and in the time of the New Testament. The literature to be considered is found partly in the Old Testament, especially in the later parts of the five books of Moses, in the so-called code of laws of the priests to be found in Exodus, Leviticus, and

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Numbers, further in a large number of the Psalms, although these display a broader piety and an earlier spirit. Lastly, there are a considerable number of later Jewish writings known by the name of the Apocrypha and the pseudo-epigraphs. These include the really valuable literature of the Apocalypse, which begins with the Old Testament book of Daniel, and to which, in accordance with its fundamental character, the New Testament revelation of St. John belongs.

Secondly we must study the Persian religion after Zarathustra, to which period the greater part of the Persian religious book, the Avesta, belongs. Only perhaps in one chapter of the book of Yasna which contains the "Gathas" do we go back directly to the older reform period. Another part, the Yasht, contains songs, which perhaps reflect the pre-Zarathustrian period of polytheism, which later was again to be practised. The rest of the Avesta belongs to the period with which we are now dealing. The Persian book of the law, the Vendidad, is an historical religious pendant to the Mosaic Pentateuch.

The Iranian religion has had a varied history. In the time of the rise of the Persian world-dominion it spread west and north into the Babylonian plain, to Armenia, Cappadocia,

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Pontus, Cilicia. Alexander the Great destroyed the Persian empire but not the Persian religion. At the end of the third century B.C. the Persian nation had risen to a new independence under the rule of the Arsacidæ, and in the third century A.D., under the Sarsanians, the orthodox Persian State and the orthodox Persian Church began. It was only then that the religious books of the Avesta were collected and edited.

Thirdly, we can only partly include here the religion of the Greek cultured people—based on Plato—from the time of Alexander the Great to the fall of Hellenic civilisation. This religion, indeed, does not really belong here at all, and its true nature will be considered in the next chapter. Yet there is a formal relation, for we can trace here a compromise between a higher spiritual religion and a religion of the people.

Fourthly, we must consider the religion of a far later time, Islamism—the reform of Mohammed. On the whole, this religion must be regarded as one of retrogression, a religion of the law and of observance. Mohammed, a very complex personality, concerning whom it is very difficult to come to any definite opinion, was, in any case, not an original religious genius of the first rank. His life's work was eminently political, the union of the Arab tribes into a nation on a common religious basis, with the

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repudiation of the law of blood-revenge and blood-feud. This religion is based upon much that was contained in Judaism and Christianity, and to Mahomet both these religions appeared to have much that was corrupt. The prophetic self-consciousness which Mohammed apparently possessed was no self-deception. The prophetic gift and significance were preserved in him in their grand simplicity; out of the wild, fantastic, half-corrupt religious ideas he created for his half-barbaric Bedouin tribes a religious conception suitable to their stage of civilisation, by casting on one side a large number of unsuitable ideas. Yet this religious conception marks a retrograde step if we compare it with the religious ideas of the Old and the New Testament.

In conclusion, we must call attention to the fact that much of what will be brought forward as characteristic of the religions of the law may be applied to certain branches of the Christian Church, the Greek-Catholic and the Roman Church bearing marks of the legal, ceremonial, and particularistic nature of the worship, and even the Evangelical churches cannot be said to be entirely free from this.

With these preliminary remarks we shall now endeavour to state clearly the peculiar characteristics of the religions of the law in their most important aspects.

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I. The prophets were the promulgators of monotheism, and this—chief at least among, perhaps, other causes—gave to their preaching a universality hitherto lacking. They announced a God whose power was not limited to a people, an ideal of life which could hold good for all. In both respects, however, the religions connected with the prophets were not able to keep to this high level.

The old prophets of Israel had announced that Jehovah would annihilate His people, and would destroy the union between religion and nation. The later prophets firmly believed in a God whose people were at the lowest ebb, but they announced the restoration of these people. One of the greatest among them, the second Isaiah, made deductions of the widest import: there was only one God, and all nations were to serve Him. But Israel is the servant of the Lord, who will lead the nations to acknowledge God. Its sufferings are the punishment which the just suffer for the benefit of the unjust.

When, however, after the Exile, an independent little nation arose in Jerusalem the peculiar universality preached by the prophets was lost. Israel itself remained inalienably monotheistic; but the Jews comforted themselves with the idea that the one Almighty

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God had chosen this one nation only, and was only directing the whole world for the sake of and for the benefit of this one nation—an inconceivable contradiction, of course. The idea that was quite natural in a national religion, that God belongs to His nation, and the nation to its God, becomes now naked egoism and mere narrow-mindedness. In this way Jewish sectarianism arose.

The Jewish religion went through a further period of development, and from the second century B.C. (perhaps even from the third) it experienced an enormous expansion. Judaism overflowed its boundaries; it extended to Babylon, Egypt, and North Africa, to Syria and Asia Minor, and even as far as Greece and Rome, and then towards the West. There arose on all sides, especially in the larger towns, the Jewish communities of the Dispersion. Statistics—not of a very reliable nature, it is true—have been brought forward showing that every seventh or eighth man in the Roman Empire was a Jew. This Judaism now began a world propaganda, with great results. Cæsar and the great Emperor Augustus, as well as the latter's friend, Agrippa, were special patrons of Judaism, and later still, in the time of Nero, the supporters of the synagogue exercised great influence on

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the Roman Imperial Court. Judaism was wise enough to know how to make use of circumstances; as we know from the Gospels, it gathered around the Jewish synagogues of the separate towns a circle of religious-minded pagans. Here we have the earliest appearance of a great world-mission, the progress of which we can trace, though, it must be at once said, it was not the only one. At the very same time the various religions in the Greek-Roman Empire were striving after universality. Generally speaking, the religions which spread from the East to the West had all a monotheistic tendency, or at least a tendency towards a simplification of the complicated world of gods; they overstepped the boundaries of nations, and welcomed every one without regard to rank and nationality. The time was ripe for universal monotheism, and Judaism was, for the time being, the most important among these parallel phenomena.

But even this phenomenon of the Jewish world-Church and world-mission had its clearly marked boundaries and limitations, and, indeed, in spite of its world-wide expansion the Jewish religion remained the religion of a nation. Whoever at that time was entirely converted to Judaism changed not merely his

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religion, but his nationality. He ceased to be a Greek or a Roman, and became a Jew. Hence the hatred with which the populace, as well as the highly educated, the leaders in literature, made war upon Judaism as early as the first century B.C. It was not the religion that was attacked, but the race, the nation. A literary opponent of Judaism, no less a person than the historian Tacitus, has stated his view: "They arouse the hatred of all; they will not mingle at bed or board, they abstain from mixed marriages. Those who are converted to their religion adopt the same customs, and they are taught above everything else to reject the gods, to abandon their fatherland, to despise their children and mothers." And yet to the Jews themselves those God-fearing worshippers at the synagogue who only accepted the Jewish belief and the Jewish morality (and not the ceremonial laws) were regarded as pious men of the second rank only. There is a great difference between the kernel and the outside leaf, between the born Jew and the proselyte. Still, this period marks the nearest approach of Judaism to universalism. Already, by the end of the first century A.D., after the Romans had destroyed the Jewish nation, after there had arisen the Christian propaganda side by

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side with the Jewish one, which it was beginning to surpass, Judaism was thrown back upon itself, and it has remained until the present day a religious community limited to one people.

Very similar, yet not precisely of the same kind, was the historical progress of the Persian religion. Briefly it may be said that, in the long run, it remained, in spite of the germ of universality which it contained, linked with one nation only, and here the retrogression was even more strongly marked. For although the religion of Zarathustra had been originally monotheistic, into the later Persian religion the variegated polytheistic national belief had again found its way. A permanent part of the Avesta is the Yasht, the hymns to the various Iranian gods. The old gods of the people once more win or maintain an independent existence by the side of Ahura-Mazda. The highest god of a side branch of the Persian religion, which was superior to it in importance for centuries, was not Ahura-Mazda, but the old Arian god, Mithras, common to both the Persians and the Hindoos.

Yet in many periods of its history the Persian religion evolved just as strong a tendency towards universalism as the Jewish

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religion, perhaps even a stronger one. It was the religion of an imperial, important nation, and with this nation it spread into the West. In all probability, indeed, it influenced later Judaism in its development in several particulars—in its belief in the future life and the resurrection, and in the dualistic character of its religion (*i.e.*, the belief in the devil). The Persian religion, however, attained its highest power of development in its offspring, the religion of Mithras. We know, indeed, very little really about the inner, spiritual merit of this religion. It belongs to the so-called mystery-religions of the later Roman-Hellenic period of culture, which were surrounded with secrecy. The principal god, and practically the only god of this religion, was Mithras, originally the god of light, later the unconquerable, victorious sun-god as well as the guardian of all fidelity, morality, and veracity. From the end of the second century A.D. this religion, always favoured by the Roman Emperors, became the most important in the Roman Empire. With its sharp distinction between good and evil, its fundamental principle that every useful act, every act that advanced morality and civilisation, was an act performed for God; with the severe discipline, the acts of renunciation and of penance

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which it imposed upon its worshippers; with its worship of the victorious sun-god; with the mystical nimbus with which it surrounded the person of the worldly ruler, this religion was fitted, as no other was, to become the religion of the Roman legions. The Roman legions carried the worship of Mithras beyond the Rhine; in Baden and Hesse places where the Persian god was worshipped are still to be found. The religion of Mithras was the last dangerous rival of Christianity. The Emperor Julian, the great opponent of the Galilean, was a worshipper of Mithras. Finally, however, after the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the Persian religion was entirely confined to the Persian nation. Here the orthodox, intolerant Persian Church of the Sassanian period, which persecuted the Christians, was developed until the end was prepared for it by the triumphant progress of Islamism.

We have now come to the third religion which is to be considered. Islamism, indeed, has the characteristics of a religion which has remained at the transition stage. Considered superficially, it seems, of course, to have the character of a monotheistic universal religion. Belief in one God as the central point of religion is upheld with great zeal, with fanatical

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obstinacy even. We need not discuss here the lack of any sense of suitability which was displayed in retaining in a monotheistic religion, a place sacred to the heathen gods—the Kaaba (originally a stone fetich), in Mecca—as the centre of religious worship. Islamism spread over the most different nations and race and kept, so it would appear, its universal character. According to numbers, Islamism, with its 200,000,000 adherents, stands third among the religions. Its proselytes to-day are numerically greater than those of Christianity. But it has not been successful in influencing the more advanced and civilised peoples; it has, on the contrary, descended to the lower races, to the Mongols and the negroes. In its native land of Arabia, the population, speaking in general terms, has once more sunk to the level of Bedouin life before the time of Mohammed.

Yet Islamism seems to be a religion of universal monotheism; really, however, it was, and remained, a national religion, or more correctly, a politically restricted and limited religion. Mohammed's life-work was indeed a national and political one, the amalgamation of the Arab tribes into a nation. The prophet, during his last years, and his followers inscribed on their banner, as their object, the political dominion of the world. In the development of

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Islamism the question of Mohammed's legal successor—a political question of great moment —played the most important part of all. Here sects and parties were as much divided as Christians on matters of belief. Islamism attained its expansion by holy war and propaganda by the sword. In its dealings with Judaism and Christianity, it did not pursue the proper object of a universal religion, namely, conversion, but only that of political subjection. It preferred, on the whole, the tribute money of the unbeliever to conversion. To-day Islamism is still a political power. It recognises, generally speaking, only one political chief, who is, for the majority of believers, the Sultan of Turkey. When the Shah of Persia, who claims leadership, goes to Constantinople, many ceremonial objections are made to the visit. And if an Islamic warrior-hero were to appear upon the scene with such success that the belief spread that he was the longed-for redeemer, the Mahdi, the whole of Islam would undertake a holy war; for religion and politics are very closely bound up with one another in Islamism.

If at this point we cast a glance at the development of the Christian Churches, we shall see how the national, political element had here gained the mastery. The Christian religion of the Eastern Byzantine Empire is almost as

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absolutely national and limited as the Persian Church of the Sassanian Empire. The great rival of Islamism, Rome of the Middle Ages, Rome of the powerful Papacy and the Crusades, had generated a political piety, which, so far as its essential character is concerned, stands in close relationship to that of Islamism. Only after long and severe struggles has religion been able to burst the fetters of national and political narrowness, and rise to the conception of a wide, free universalism.

II. We have seen how the prophets were the opponents of sacrificial worship, the central idea of all national religions. The religions based on the law maintained a divided opinion on this matter. The early prophets of Israel were zealous supporters of the worship in the Temple, and after the Babylonian captivity the ceremonial tendency triumphed in the newly-founded Jewish priest-state. Every seventh man of those who returned from exile was a priest. The later legislation of Israel was ceremonial and priest-ridden. The majority of the psalms bear witness to an unrestricted, unhesitating ceremonial worship. But the critical voices were loudly opposed to it; the last chapter of Isaiah displays this in most powerful manner:

"The heaven is My throne, the earth is My

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footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto Me? what place shall be My rest? . . . He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as he that offereth swine's blood; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol."

It is true that powerful polemical voices of this kind were but seldom raised. From the point of view of general characterisation, it is more important to observe that, on the whole, the later Jewish piety bore no natural relation to the newly arisen worship. Worship no longer remained the centre of piety; this was, indeed, impossible, owing to the wide expansion of Judaism. The worship so intimately bound up with the Temple at Jerusalem did not suffice for a Judaism spread over the whole world. A religious service in which the individual could only take part once or twice in his life, perhaps, could not very well remain the central point of religion. With the third and second centuries B.C. the deterioration and secularisation of the Jewish priesthood began to set in, and, above all, it is to be noted that the new religious service of the synagogue was accepted, the value of which we shall estimate later. Thus the soul of pious Judaism was released

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from ceremonial worship. The destruction of the Temple, and consequently of Divine worship (in 70 A.D.), did not in any way injure Judaism.

Matters followed very much the same course in the Persian religion, though they are not so clearly to be distinguished. Zarathushtra preached, on the whole, it would seem, a religion without ceremony. The priests were the enemies of the prophet. It struck the Greeks as extraordinary above all else that in the Persian religion there were no temples, no images, and no sacrificing of animals. Still, there remained a certain amount of ceremonial in the religion. There was, specially, the worship of fire. In numberless temples of fire the holy fire was maintained, tended, and worshipped amid countless ceremonies which only the members of the priesthood were able to perform. Gradually animal sacrifice crept into the Persian religion. In the religion of Mithras sacrifice played a very important part, as did the worship in the subterranean temples at the altars of the god to whom bulls were offered. This worship was surrounded by mysterious rites of a magic nature.

Islamism, the most consistent of all the three religions in this respect, substituted for sacrificial worship a spiritual form of worship. Its examples were Christianity, and, above all, a

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Judaism which no longer employed sacrifices in its worship. The history of the Christian religion, however, shows how very difficult it is to overcome in a religion the idea of sacrifice, the belief that man is not permitted to approach the Godhead without sacrifice. From the time of Paul onwards the central idea of the Christian religion has been, more or less, that for believers the necessary Sacrifice was offered once for all in the death of Christ. Both branches of the Catholic Church still preserve as the central point of their worship the sacrificial Mass, the spiritual representation of the great Sacrifice that was once offered.

III. Although the religions of the law gradually departed from Temple worship and sacrificial worship, and the whole series of customs, &c., bound up with these, no truly spiritual religion arose in its place. For instead of "worship" a powerful external means of union came into existence; this was "observance," or religious custom. We must endeavour to understand the nature of this phenomenon.

Let us consider later Judaism. What gives this religion its peculiar hall-mark? Is it not religious custom—circumcision, the maintenance of the Sabbath, the tithes, the avoidance of mixed marriages, the laws concerning food, directions for purifications, and *not* sacrifice

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and worship in the temples? Throughout the world a Jew is recognised by these things.

All these customs were originally national customs to which no specially religious significance was attached, or at any rate only in so far as all national customs are at the same time religious customs when religion is at the national stage. Now these customs become the very centre of religion, they are the first holy commands of God. Circumcision, originally a national symbol—the meaning of which is not quite clear—that Israel had separated from the other nations, became the very essence of Judaism. The union of God with Abraham rested on the idea of circumcision. The custom of keeping the Sabbath holy was a very old religious custom, perhaps of Babylonian origin; its meaning was no clearer than that of circumcision, but now it becomes the second great religious law. On the seventh day man is to cease from his labour, as God rested from His work of creation. The breaking of this law was punishable by death. The payment of tithes, originally a simple duty appertaining to worship, became now a principle of religious life. Curiously enough, this payment was now regarded as of much greater importance than of yore, although, as a matter of fact, the service in the Temple provided by it lost more and

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more any significance for the true inner life of religion.

This emphasis laid on religious custom developed—in the centuries immediately preceding the period of the New Testament—into a regular system. In this way there arose the party which we call Pharisaical. The leader of the Pharisees pronounced his ideal to be "to put a hedge round the people"—that is, to surround the whole life of the people with a large number of ceremonial regulations, to give them an appointed task for every moment, every minute, every hour, and to preserve to the sacred nation of God its peculiar character among all other nations. It is almost impossible to conceive the way in which the lives of the faithful were bound down and confined by the hundreds and thousands of minute, insignificant rules which surrounded them. The religion of the Pharisees became the classical example of a religion of observance, and at the same time it marks a retrograde step. Yet it cannot be denied that enormous religious energy was put into this religion, but it was dissipated in trifles, ensnared in outward observances. The object, that of preserving to the Jews their peculiarities, was attained, but at the price of contempt among the other nations for the "sacred people,"

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The Persian religion (Zoroastrianism) developed in a manner analogous to that of Judaism. It also became a religion of observance. The Vendidad, the Persian Book of the Law, bears a great likeness to the middle books of the Pentateuch. The representations of the battles of the Greeks and the Persians on the celebrated so-called Alexander sarcophagus are well known. There the Persians are everywhere recognised by the great mouth-bands which half covered their faces. We are confronted with one of the principles of the Persian religion. The pious Persian must always wear a band over his mouth so that his breath may not pollute the holy elements, fire and air. Besides the wearing of this mouth-band it is the religious duty of every adult Persian to wear the sacred girdle. The whole Persian religion is penetrated with a fear of dishonouring and defiling the elements. Especially characteristic is the treatment of corpses, which is a quite intelligible custom, regarded from the above point of view. The Persian may not burn the corpse, for then he would defile the holy fire, and he must not confide it to the earth, for that would be a crime against the holy element. So the bodies are put into great uncovered towers, and left to the birds to devour. In preparing food it is considered among the Persians a serious sin to

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let the water boil over. The fire is defiled by water that boils over. The Vendidad is full of insignificant regulations, often of a ridiculous kind, and much space is devoted to minute rules concerning the inviolability of certain classes of animals—cattle, dogs. An extensive system of penances and punishments corresponds to these minute ceremonial regulations. A deadly sin, which a man may very easily commit, may be absolved by two hundred scourgings.

It will be an easy task to show that the third religion which is to be considered, Islamism, placed religious custom in a central position. We need only call to mind the so-called five foundation pillars, *i.e.*, the religious principles of this religion. These, in addition to acknowledgment of one God, were the duty of prayer five times daily, the keeping of the month of the fast, the giving of alms to the poor, and pilgrimage to Mecca—at least once in a lifetime. Regulations concerning religious observances almost entirely occupy the central place in the religion.

Ceremony, without doubt, is a powerful external bond of union in religion. Wherever it exercises a commanding influence there is certainly no danger of an entirely isolated religious

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life; by means of it the true inwardness and spirituality of religion can be preserved, the consciousness of a direct vital relation to God, and the feeling of unconditional moral duty. Yet it is clear that it may be an enormous danger for the religious life. Three great religions have been more or less destroyed by it. What a power ceremony displayed even in the Christian Churches! At the same time, ceremony kept religion firmly fixed at the national stage, for, as we have already seen, the national custom continues in the religious observance. There is also another point to be considered: the current idea of right is connected with custom. Religious custom is synonymous with religious right. Religion and jurisprudence at this stage of religion form a very close alliance. Religion threatens to become merely in the nature of a contract between God and man. The feeling of the superiority of the Godhead tends to disappear; the idea of profit plays the principal part. Religion becomes a business. And just as legal justice, in accordance with its nature—at least in practice—is outwardly casuistical and more negative than positive, so religion assumes the character of casuistry outwardly, and threatens to fall into ruin through an excess of regulations, and especially of prohibitions. Thus

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custom, usage, and right put obstacles in the way of a closer union between the two vital forces which are really connected—religion and morality.

IV. We must also notice some new characteristic forms and peculiarities which are common to the religions at this stage. Speaking generally, it may be said that when religion freed itself from the fetters of nationality and ceased to be merely a national custom such new forms were a necessity.

First of all we have the creed. Religion is now no longer a matter of custom, but of personal conviction; hence a new bond of union came into existence which would render the possession of religion which all held in common quite secure. This new bond was a short summary of the most important points in the religion, in the form of dogmatic sentences—that is, the creed. Among the original documents of Zoroastrianism numerous creeds of this kind are to be found. The oldest known creed of the Ahuna-Vairya—which even to the followers of this religion had become an unintelligible formula (one remembers the Catholic Paternoster here)—may be roughly translated as "The will of the Lord is the law of justice. The reward of heaven is for

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those who have worked in the world for Mazda. Ahura grants the kingdom to those who have helped the poor." Another interesting formula which is used in the confession of the Mazda faith runs thus: "I abjure the devil. I confess myself as a worshipper of Mazda, a believer in Zarathushtra, an enemy of the Devas, an adorer of the Ameshas-Spentas. I abjure theft and the plunder of cattle. I abjure plundering and laying waste. Sincerely and with raised hand do I swear all this." It is noticeable how in this confession of faith the religion of Zoroastrianism appears in its striving after civilisation, in its struggle against the barbarians. In Israel the creed is less strongly developed. The prayer, however, which as early as the period of the New Testament the Jew had to say morning and evening, the so-called *Schema*, is simply a creed: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone. Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy powers." "Allah is great, and Mohammed is his prophet," confesses the follower of Mohammed.

The belief naturally corresponds to the creed. In the prophetical religions, as we have already seen, everything is based on personal conviction of belief. The consciousness that religion was a belief was already beginning to dawn, although

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it only developed itself freely at a higher stage. We have already referred to the fact that one of the first Medean kings, King Phraortes, was called the Confessor. "Above all else, love thy God, who created heaven and earth"; thus began a Jewish document in which was shortly summarised, for the purpose of propaganda work, the quintessence of the Jewish religion and morality. And as religion became more and more conviction, it follows that now in one and the same people a sharp line is drawn between the religious and the irreligious, between believers and non-believers. As long as religion remained stationary at the stage of national religions, the godless were a rapidly disappearing exception. The supporters of the nation were naturally supporters of the religion. Now religion makes a cleft in the individual nation. In the early Persian documents we often meet with a distinction between believers and doubters, between the godless and the faithful. It is well known how in the Old Testament the believers in the law are contrasted with the scoffers, the pious with the godless; and it is likewise well known, as we see in the New Testament, that hostility existed between the Pharisees on the one hand and the sinners and publicans on the other.

V. These religions now found for themselves

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a new bond of union in a collection of the original documents appertaining to their religion. Everywhere at this stage of religion, we meet with the same noteworthy fact, a canon of the holy writings. In Judaism we have the collection of Old Testament writings which was finished in the time of the New Testament; for Zoroastrianism we have the religious documents, the Avestas, which did not receive their final form until the period of the Sassanian dynasty; Buddhism had its Tripitaka (so-called because of its contents, divided into three parts), Islamism its Koran. The secular, half-philosophic nature of the late Hellenic, post-Platonic religion is seen in the fact that no attempt was made to put together a similar collection on its behalf.

These collections of writings are of very varied contents; they all, however, have this characteristic in common, that they contain witnesses from the classic past of religion, from a period that is considered absolutely authoritative for the present. Proverbs, sayings, writings of the founder of the religion and of the great men of the past who stood near him; hymns to the Godhead; ancient sacred history; stories from the life of the founder; ceremonial, religious, and moral directions—all these are to be found in these books of manifold contents.

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This canon now becomes an absolute authority; it gives clear, positive, and complete answers to every question respecting belief, morality, and worship. Its authority is binding and inviolable, for the canon—this again is a conviction common to all these religions—is inspired. It is not the work of man, but it has been given literally by the Godhead. To faith the most impossible thing becomes possible. To the Jews of the New Testament period not only were the Old Testament writings inspired, but likewise the Greek translation of these writings. The law of Moses was prehistoric (in their view), it existed before the creation of the world and was revealed by Heaven. An almost fetich-like reverence was paid to the Thora rolls, the rolls on which the law was written. By the later adherents of Islamism the Koran was regarded as a book fallen from heaven. Every letter is inspired, every letter is a witness; the statement, "It is written in the Koran," is decisive. Piety consists of the most intimate familiarity with the text of the writings.

Thus there arose a new order of leaders and guides in the religious life; as religion now rests on a canon of holy writings, a careful, systematic study of these writings is of the utmost importance. The leaders of religion

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were now the learned men who had studied the holy writings and knew every part of them thoroughly. It is well known how important was the part played by those learned in the Holy Scriptures among the Jewish people in the time of Christ. A saying of Hillel's, a contemporary of Christ's, "No uneducated man shuns sin, no common man is pious," illustrates the arrogance of this leadership based on learning. We know how strongly Jesus opposed this piety resting on learning. The Mager played a somewhat similar part in the Persian religion; we must think of these men as half-priests, and above all as learned men well versed in the old sacred traditions. Parallel to the phenomenon of the Jewish learned doctors and the Mager were the late Hellenic philosophers who taught religion and morality to their little circles rather than secular knowledge. Mohammedanism in the Middle Ages had its theologians who exercised a beneficial influence upon Christian theology. The theologians became the leaders of religion.

In connection with this there arose a new form of piety which might be described as learned piety. Reverence for the Scriptures, constant and devout reading of the Scriptures were the signs of this piety. It is characteristic

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of Jewish piety that the boy learnt to read from the Scriptures. "The Bible became his primer." In the early days of Islamism the bigoted and fanatical sect of the "Koran-readers" played a great part. In the beginning of the struggle concerning the successor of the Prophet, when two Mohammedan armies met the side that had already been conquered put Korans on the point of their lances, and then those on the other side abstained from taking advantage of their victory. True, earnest piety may be and often has been combined with this piety based on an absolute belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. But there is great danger attached to it. It is not only that piety tends to become mere learning: it is that this constant dwelling upon the sacred past, this constant neglect of the present and its duty, is especially dangerous. Piety becomes an empty game of memory, a game in which a crafty ingenuity plays an important part. Those who are best able to apply to the present and its needs the half-understood texts of Scripture, torn from their contexts, impress people and are considered religious.

VI. We must also specially notice that now an entirely new form of common worship arose, that new form of worship which we see most clearly in the Jewish synagogue. We

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have already mentioned that the real old ceremonial worship of Judaism, now scattered far and wide, was confined to the Temple at Jerusalem. It was therefore almost a necessity that a non-ritualistic worship in the synagogue should arise. How was this service in the synagogue instituted? A gathering together of the community in a sacred building, especially on the Sabbath, prayer in common, reading of the Scriptures, exposition of the Scriptures—we should call this preaching—blessing, these were the elements of this Divine service. This new form of worship spread with Judaism all over the world. It was a Divine service without ceremonial pomp, without a priesthood, without sacrifice; the organisation was completely democratic. Truly we have here almost a worship in spirit and in truth, in forms which are still extraordinarily familiar to us. In the Persian religion the service remained more ceremonial, more ritualistic, but we possess less clear information concerning the institutions of Divine service in the Persian religion. Tradition tells us that there were "reading-places" in this religion. In Islamism, however, we have again this same form of non-ceremonial worship. One of the five dogmas of Islamism is the duty of prayer five times daily. What the Mohammedan calls a prayer we

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should call a short service. Five times a day at the appointed times the faithful gather together in the mosques. From the graceful minarets, the symbol of all Mohammedan towns, the crier announces the hours of prayer. Under the guidance of a leader, the pious say their entirely conventional prayers. At mid-day there is a solemn service with preaching.

Many other forms of religion at this stage might be described; I will only refer to the lay prayers outside the synagogue, which were systematic and regular, to the value which was laid upon fasting in both Judaism and Islamism, and to the importance of tending to the poor and alms-giving in all three religions.

VII. The close connection between these three religions in their main characteristics is seen most clearly if we look at one fundamental idea that is common to all three of them—that of the Judgment, one of the most important ideas in the history of religion. We have seen how the thought of future retribution was already present in the national religions, but nowhere—with the exception of the Egyptian religion, which was already stagnant—was it the central idea. In the religions of the law this idea now gained an overmastering and dominating importance. It seemed as if the Persian religion were to take the lead here, for it was the Persian

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religion apparently that first developed the idea of future retribution with very great energy, and pushed it into the foreground. "The reward of heaven is for the works which are performed in this world for Mazda," runs the text in the ancient Ahuna-Vairya. The oldest writings of Zoroastrianism are full of mysterious references to the great day of terrible judgment. The Persian religion developed this idea in a twofold form; on the one hand it announced for the individual judgment immediately after death, and on the other hand it preached a great world-judgment by Ahura-Mazda combined with the burning of the world, the re-creation of the world, and the resurrection of the dead. Judaism between the third and second centuries, so it appears, developed, under the influence of the Persian religion, and through the expansion of the germinating ideas of its own religion, the thought of a future retribution—also in a twofold form. And finally this belief became the central point in Mohammed's preaching. Wherever we open the Koran we find the doctrine of the last day, of eternal judgment. A few examples are sufficient to show what power and weight this belief had developed in these religions at the time of which we are speaking. Here on the one side we have a Jewish Apocalyptic writer at the

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end of the first century A.D., the author of the so-called Fourth Book of Ezra:

"And after seven days the world that yet awaketh not shall be raised up, and that shall die that is corrupt. And the earth shall restore those that are asleep in her, and so shall the dust those that dwell in silence, and the secret places shall deliver those souls that were committed unto them.

"And the Most High shall appear upon the seat of judgment, and misery shall pass away, and the long suffering shall have an end:

"But judgment only shall remain, truth shall stand, and faith shall wax strong:

"And the work shall follow, and the reward shall be shewed, and the good deeds shall be of force, and wicked deeds shall bear no rule."

By the side of this may be placed Sura 101 of the Koran:

"On that day men shall be like moths scattered abroad, and the mountains shall become like carded wool of various colours driven by the wind. Moreover he whose balance shall be heavy with good works, shall lead a pleasing life: but as to him whose balance shall be light, his dwelling shall be the pit of hell. Who shall make thee to understand how frightful the pit of hell is. It is a burning hell."*

* Sale's Translation.

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It is no wonder that in these religions—in which all appears based on legal acts in honour of God, and where right plays so important a part—the idea of retribution should occupy a central position. In any case these religions have here developed a belief of enormous importance for religious life, to which it gave a concentrated, united, and immense strength. The object of man's whole life and action appears now to be his examination on the Day of Judgment before the awful presence of God. Man is placed on the earth for a short span of time in order to prepare for eternity. Religion and morality are most closely united in this belief. The whole history of the world, from this aspect, becomes an intimate unity, and at the end there is the great Day of Judgment for the world. The life of the individual becomes enormously more valuable now, for by his acts and his omissions he settles his eternal destiny, and in his own hands he holds heaven and hell.

Here once more we perceive the limitations and restrictions in the religions of the law. The tendency towards external forms, the dependence on the senses, the incapability of a pure comprehension of any great and spiritual ideas are clearly shown. The idea of judgment is everywhere a terribly material one, generally resolv-

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ing itself into an entirely mechanical estimation of good and bad works. The representation of the judgment as scales in which the good and evil deeds are weighed is widespread and popular in all these religions. Life falls into a series of single acts which can be added up. There is no conception of religion as a spontaneous stretching forth towards God, or that the good life, as God wishes it, is a unity, a whole. Religion becomes a business, a haggling and a bargaining with God. The pious perform good works, and the good things of the next world are the wages which God pays the pious man, just as the labourer is given his wages. To the Pharisee in the time of Christ life was a daily balancing and reckoning with God to see whether there was the necessary surplus of good works. The lack of good works was compensated for by penances and castigations of all kinds. The pious Persian atoned for sin by a necessary number of scourgings, and painfully but surely earned heaven for himself.

Not only at this stage did the belief in future retribution remain wedded to external forms, but it was also steeped in materialism. In all three religions heaven and hell are represented in the most hateful and materialistic forms. It would seem as if the sensuality, so strictly repressed in the religions of the law, found relief

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in these ghastly ideas of heaven and hell. Life in heaven is nothing more than a continuation of this life in undisturbed material satisfaction, a life without sickness and trouble, a wandering through luxuriant meadows and by clear streams, a riot of delicious food and drink and passionate love. Life in hell is extreme physical torment, frost and hunger, and the pains of fire, the disgusting worm and darkness. For the especially wicked there are punishments which only the most corrupt imagination could have devised.

Very deeply rooted are these ideas concerning the future life in the Zoroastrian and Mohammedan religions. Judaism rose to a more spiritual conception, to a really moral and religious comprehension of the belief in retribution, as we see in many of its eschatological forms. But when Judaism united to the thought of the eternal judgment of God its own national pretensions, its hope of an earthly triumph over all hostile people, it remained stuck fast in its belief in a material and concrete future life.

We must now summarise and picture to ourselves once again the innermost character of these three religions. We see everywhere a tendency from national individualism and polytheism to universal monotheism; a striving

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after the things of the spirit; an evolution from custom to belief and conviction; from the worship in the Temple to a spiritual, Divine service; from sacrifice to prayer. But at the same time there is everywhere visible a dependence on material things. Observance and law triumph, religion remains fettered to custom and to the nation. The true universal monotheism does not burst forth, the bond between religion and morality seems frustrated.

Man needs something united, something harmonious, in religion. He demands an ideal of life, a spiritual good which lies beyond the ordinary life, of a higher, more moral, kind. Everywhere, however, we see this striving frustrated, lost in the most insignificant trifles, stifled in outward observances.

But we must not be unjust towards these religions of transition. Much has been attained —a certain freedom from national particularism and polytheism, a certain deliverance from outward forms, from temple and sacrificial worship, and new forms have been created. The thought that religion is belief, conviction, is beginning to dawn. At this stage of religion we have confession, the Holy Scripture with its dependent piety, theology, a new spiritual form of worship, systematised lay prayers. Above all, the powerful idea of future retribution has

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advanced to a central position. The elements and beginnings of a higher culture are here; they lie side by side. Only a great process of deliverance is now required, and a new religious power which will accomplish this process.

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CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGIONS OF REDEMPTION: BUDDHA, PLATO

WE must now take into special consideration two of those great reform movements which were described in the fourth chapter, because they led to a peculiar type of religion, wholly opposed to the religions of the law. At the opposite poles to the religions of the law stand the religions of redemption, seen in their purest expression in Buddhism (especially of the later Indian religion) and Platonism. As these religions, in respect to their purity, spirituality, comprehensiveness, universalism, and freedom from national and polytheistic elements, represent the highest conceptions of human religion —with the exception of the Judaism of the prophets and Christianity—an attempt will be made to give a picture of each of these manifestations so as to obtain an idea of their common characteristics.

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To understand Buddhism it is necessary to penetrate somewhat deeply into the history of the ancient religion of India. This ancient religion was a national, polytheistic religion, the religion of a conquering, magnificent, warlike people, the torch-bearers of civilisation. Its principal gods were Indra, the mighty god of storm and battle, violent and lustful, and Varuna, the god of heaven—far superior in personal worth—the all-seeing, who discovered the hidden things, protected the just, punished and forgave sin. These early people of India already possessed a collection of religious documents, the Veda, the oldest part of which, the hymns of the Rig-veda, faithfully represents the fresh, childlike faith of these people. Gradually, after the conquest of North India by the Arian race, a great deterioration took place in the people. Life in this rich country and the enervating climate produced an evil result. The caste system, now developing, by which an invincible barrier was set up between, on the one hand, the victorious people and the subject people, and on the other hand, between the governing nobility and the other ranks of the people, contributed to this deterioration. It took from the lower classes every prospect of development and from the upper classes any real power of government. The people of India dissipated

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their power in little petty States without the incentive given by historical tradition of any kind. On all sides we have the same picture of the limitations of the petty State, of a people without a history.

It is, therefore, no wonder that among such a people the priesthood was exalted, and won its position in the highest caste. The priests were the only intermediaries between the gods and men; they usurped the sole right of reading the Vedas and of offering sacrifice. The fire-god Agni, originally simply fire, developed, as god of the priestly sacrificial fire, into the highest deity of the Hindoos, side by side with Indra and Varuna.

The passivity which is apparent now in Indian civilisation spread to the religion. The individual figures of the gods vanish more and more, and blend one into the other. At one moment one particular god is endowed with all god-like attributes, and the next these are transferred to another. No single figure of a god rose to commanding eminence, as Zeus among the Greeks, Ahura-Mazda among the Persians, or Jehovah in ancient Israel; rather it may be said that out of the concrete world of many gods rose the abstract idea of the Godhead. Not only did the concrete figures of the gods vanish by degrees, but there arose an extra-

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ordinary confusion in religion between cause and effect, between subject and object. The germs of this change are seen in the worship paid to the sacerdotal fire of sacrifice. By a peculiar transfusing of the material means of worship and the Godhead, the sacrificial fire—as well as the sacrificial wine, *Soma*—which, according to the priestly conception, the gods have produced, merges into the Godhead itself. In the same way Brahma, the priestly prayer, the prayer which compels the gods, becomes later, not merely the appointed prayer of worship, but meditation by means of which the believer is absorbed in the Godhead, and finally it becomes the Godhead itself.

In this way the later Hindoo religion of Brahminism has developed. This orthodox Hindoo religious system which was now in the process of development had two or three fundamental principles.

I. The complete blending in religion of the subject and the object. The Godhead is comprehended as the highest, most complete entity, immanent in human life and all other life, the final reality in the vastness of life and its phenomena. "The man who understands that all creatures exist in God alone, and so grasps the unity of existence, has no sorrow and no illusion."

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How does the Brahman reach this highest reality? How does he attain this certainty concerning his existence? By absorption in his own *ego*. Man possesses a spiritual life of the profoundest, the soul of his soul. The Hindoo calls it *Atman* (breath). When the human being withdraws from all contact with the other world which is obtained through the senses, when he abstains from all desires and wishes, nay, from all speaking and thinking, absorbing himself completely in himself, then he finds his real, his innermost, self. The teaching of Brahminism consists in this: the highest God, the one God, is identical with the innermost self of man. When the human being turns aside completely from the material fact of his *ego*, and his personal life, and surrenders his *ego* entirely, he finds within himself as the basis of his being the universal being of the Godhead. Brahma is Atman, Atman is Brahma. The *I* and the *Thou* are extinguished in religion. Two ways lead to the goal of this last and highest recognition. First of all there is the way of prayer, of meditation, of simple, spiritual, reflective absorption; the other way is the more violent —the way of asceticism, penances, castigations. Through violent means of all kinds, through scourging and torments must the *ego* of the human being be killed, until in a condition of

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dull stupor or highest exaltation man realises the identity of the Divine and human existence.

II. The other pillar of all Indian religious systems is the doctrine of re-incarnation or soul-transmigration. We do not know whether this was an element of the old Hindoo religion or whether it may have originally belonged to the barbaric aborigines who were conquered by the Indians; in any case it is a relic of the lowest type of religious conception. In the lowest stage of religious life, as we have already seen, the belief was widespread that the human soul after the death of the human being passed into another living form, an animal, a plant, another human being, or even into a lifeless object. This doctrine of the transmigration of souls (*Samsara*) now became the central belief of the Hindoo religion; it was systematised, and through the addition of a new thought it received a moral and teleological direction. By means of it the Hindoo endeavours to solve the mystery of his existence. He asks himself why fortune and misfortune are so unequally divided in this mortal life, and why there is so much undeserved misery. Most of the great religions of which we have already treated answer these questions by an appeal to the future, and believe in the compensation of all injustice in a future life, in a Divine justice

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to be revealed finally. The Hindoo religion, on the contrary, casts its glance backwards. It proclaims that the misfortunes and sufferings of this life are due to the misdeeds and the guilt of the individual in a former life. To each human being is allotted the fate in life which he has won for himself by his conduct and his actions in an earlier life. According to the Hindoo conception this chain of re-incarnation is interminable. The soul-energy can never be self-extinguished, the present existence is always the cause of the next one. The process never ends. This teaching of the transmigration of souls (*Samsara*) and the continued influence of the deeds of the earlier life into a later one (*Karma*) is the second principle of Brahminism.

III. Finally, there is a third element in the Hindoo religion, which, however, can only be considered as in part connected with belief in Brahma. I mean pessimism. The true real life is the life of the one existence; all life apart from this is necessarily incomplete, all individual existence is necessarily painful. The spiritual and mental condition of the people of India strengthens this disposition of mind. The Indian, as we have already seen, knows no future and has no past. Life represents to him the coming and going of the generations, a weary game without any object. He feels, through

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this belief in re-incarnation, that he is for ever chained with iron links to this miserable existence. Such a belief renders the misery of individual existence eternal. There is no cessation, no rest, no death.

Hence the whole of religion and life is concentrated in one great longing for release from this transmigration of souls—deliverance from life, simply that, rest after eternal, painful wandering.

The pre-Buddhist Vedanta philosophy had already discovered this deliverance. It announced that deliverance from the misery of life was to be found in the right recognition of the unity of human nature with the one God, based on the deepest foundation, and of the necessary incompleteness of all mortal life. This knowledge exercised a wonderful power; it took from the individual existence its substance, its power of re-incarnation. The wise man who recognised this passed after death to a state of absolute rest.

Besides the orthodox Vedanta philosophy, the systematic philosophy based on the Vedas, there were numerous other systems, especially the system of the Sankhya philosophy. Their adherents already denied the one essential principle of the Hindoo religion, the existence of the one Divine being. They upheld the

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atomic theory, and believed that the world consisted of a multitude of closely connected beings. We find here, however, the two other pillars of the Hindoo religion, belief in reincarnation and in pessimism. Redemption is accomplished by correct perception. Whoever recognises that body and soul have nothing in common with one another is thereby raised above all earthly misery. For as all the suffering of life only concerns the bodily existence of man, it is a mistake to believe that the innermost being of man, his soul, can be in any way affected by it. Thus in certain points, perhaps, there may be said to be a connection between Buddhism and the Sankhya philosophy, and so a comprehension of this element of pre-Buddhistic religious life is necessary.

I have given here the main outline of the Hindoo religion before Buddha, but the outline only. To complete the picture we must add that these religious ideas, originally fairly simple and comprehensible, were obstructed by a mass of rubbish and a chaos of external matters. Yet the ancient Hindoo books of religion, the Vedas, are still current. In its would-be learned method of exposition—troubling very little about the true meaning—the new doctrines apparently derived something from the ancient holy book, which rested on a

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quite different religious foundation; the priest caste with all its privileges remained, religion still kept its old formal, unintelligible, stagnant worship. The comparatively simple principles of the Hindoo religion of redemption were overgrown with widespread, complex speculations of all kinds—speculation as to how the finite proceeded from the One God, speculation concerning the nature of man and his attributes, speculation concerning the laws of the transmigration of souls. The belief in redemption was combined, as has already been mentioned, with strong ascetic tendencies. The human being sought to extort redemption by the most extraordinary external means, by terrible acts of renunciation and penance. This endeavour was already organised: the caste of the ascetics stood side by side with the caste of the priests.

And now Buddha and the Buddhistic reforms appear in the religious history of the Indian people. Buddha thus became the founder of a world-religion; it was Buddhism and not Brahmanism that first overstepped the boundaries of the Indian people. Upon what does the mystery of Buddha's success rest? It is not easy to discover. People have sought to discover it in various things. Buddha has been honoured as, above all else, the social reformer who abolished the Indian caste system. This is by no means

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correct. Again, people have sought to see in its principle of universalism the peculiar characteristic of the Buddhist religion; and lastly, every attempt to find anything peculiar in his doctrine and his religion has been abandoned in favour of explaining the mystery by his extraordinary personality. This last view is, to a certain extent, the true one. In the person of Buddha the religion of Buddhism was concentrated. In no other religion, with the exception of Christianity, has a single personality won such a lasting importance as in Buddhism, which to a large extent rests on this fact.

Gautama Buddha, the son of a petty Indian prince in Kapilavastu (130 miles N.E. of Benares), was born in the middle of the sixth century before Christ. He did not belong to the priest-caste, but to the warrior-caste. In his twenty-ninth year he was converted. He completed his work of the "Great Renunciation," as it is called in the Indian stories, left wife and child, and went forth into the wide world. After long wanderings and vain exertions, the decisive hour of revelation came to him, and from that time Buddha believed in his mission as redeemer of the world. His first sermon was given in Benares to five former schoolfellows, and soon he had sixty disciples gathered around him. He now organised his followers into an order of

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wandering, begging monks. He succeeded in gaining as his friend and patron one of the most powerful princes, the Prince of Magadha, who assigned to him and his friends a bamboo grove near his chief town as a dwelling-place in the rainy season. The reformer's calling and reputation were now secure. His life was uniformly divided between travelling, preaching, and begging. Every year during the rainy season he gathered together his disciples for intimate personal intercourse. Surrounded by his disciples, Buddha died in his eightieth year. His order of monks spread over the whole of the Eastern world.

Great indeed is the significance of the person of the founder of the Buddhist religion. Stories of his life, which the legends soon adorned in the most wonderful manner, form a large part of the sacred literature. The sacred books are full of his sayings, a certain number of which are probably faithfully transmitted to us. Even though overladen with the dust of tradition, the portrait of his personality rises clear before us. From many little scenes we recognise very clearly what a strong personal impression Buddha made upon his disciples. Thus the earliest of his disciples, Sunita, relates the following: "Of humble birth was I sprung; I was poor and needy. Mean was the work that

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I did, that of removing the withered flowers. I was despised of men, accounted of little worth, often rebuked. . . . Then one day I saw Buddha with his monks, when he, the great hero, entered the important town of Magadha. Then I put on one side my labour, and stepped up to him to bow before him in all reverence, and cast myself at the Master's feet, and came up to him and entreated him, the highest among all beings, to accept me as a monk. Then the most gracious Master spoke unto me: 'Come unto me, oh monk.' This was the consecration which I received."

Yet the value of Buddha's person in true Buddhism has its definite limitations (we put on one side the deification of Buddha at a later period). The ideal of deliverance, which is the peculiar characteristic of the Buddhist religion, delivers the individual believer from the person of the Master as from all else. The monk who is penetrated through and through with the ideal of eternal rest casts far behind him the person and the society of the Master. Buddha teaches the individual to be his own redeemer. Shortly before his death Buddha himself is said to have expressed his views in this matter most decisively to his disciple Ananda:

"It may be that you think that the Word has lost its Master, and that you have now no longer

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a Master. But you must not feel like that, Ananda. The doctrine and the system which I have taught and revealed to you—these will be your masters when I have passed away."

We must not, therefore, seek for the mystery of his world-wide success in the person of Buddha alone; it is to some extent based on the nature of his teaching. The mystery of his teaching rests, as in many other cases, on its simplicity. Out of the confused mass of complicated phenomena a simplified whole was created which was comprehended in a few short sentences.

Buddha at the very first cast on one side all custom and pious tradition. For him and his disciples the authority of the Veda, the ancient national sacred repository, and its world of many gods no longer existed. And with this ancient religious book there passed away the whole artificial system of theology built up upon the Veda, all those interpretations and artificial explanations with which the sacred writings were saddled. The whole sacrificial worship based on the Vedas came to an end, as well as the priesthood and its privileges, and, so far as the Buddhist monk was concerned, the caste system of the Hindoo.

And much more even than this passed away. Buddha would have nothing to do with two

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things which characterised the last phase of the Hindoo religion—learned speculative theories and exaggerated asceticism. The story of Buddha's conversion is extraordinarily instructive in connection with this. When, after the renunciation of his wife and child, Gautama went forth into the world to find redemption, he listened first of all to the discourses of two wise Brahmans, but he soon perceived he had nothing to learn from them, and so continued his journey. With five of his companions who had already joined him he applied himself to the most severe penances; but he found no peace for his mind in these things, and after he had on one occasion sunk down by their side half dead with exhaustion, he turned away from them, composed and resolute, and continued his pilgrimage alone, an apostate in the eyes of his companions.

He did not find his stopping-place in philosophic speculations nor in ascetic practices, but simply in practical religious perception and in acts corresponding to this perception. From this time forward Buddha was deeply impressed with a sense of the insecurity, insufficiency and superfluity of all pure knowledge. He made this clear to his disciples by a comparison: one day in a wood he took up a few leaves in his hand, and told them that whatever knowledge

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he had revealed to them was as those leaves compared with the whole forest. "And why, my disciples, do you think I have not revealed more to you? Because, oh my disciples, knowledge brings no profit to you, because it does not advance you in holiness; it does not lead to the renunciation of earthly things, to the suppression of lust, to the renunciation of the transitory, to peace, to understanding, to enlightenment or to Nirvana. Therefore I have only revealed to you but a little."

He only revealed to his disciples what was of benefit to mankind, and what was of direct practical interest—the doctrine of suffering and the deliverance from suffering. Everything outside this was superfluous and injurious. To the list of unnecessary questions belonged those concerning the final unity of the world, the final perfected existence and its relation to the individual life—that is to say, all questions concerning God, the nature of man, the concrete existence of the soul, the survival of the ego after death, the more positive or purely negative idea of the condition of eternal rest (*Nirvana*).

In all these things he appears as the complete sceptic. He answers questions with both yes and no, he purposely admits possibilities on both sides. In certain important points, indeed, he was in conflict with the current dogmas, and

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was no longer merely a sceptic. His scepticism reached to absolute denial. Thus he categorically denies the unity and concrete form of the last stage of being, and hence Buddha preached a religion unconnected with the thoughts of God. He also denies the existence of the unity of the soul. To him the *ego* is a conglomeration of different conditions and activities which have been thrown together by chance for the sake of a common work.

The simplicity and limitations of his thought are seen in the fact that he preserved the teaching of the Samsara and Karma; that is to say, he retained, not only the doctrine of re-incarnation, but also the belief that the individual life, so far as its nature and destiny are concerned, is dependent on the deeds of an earlier existence. It is not to our purpose here to show with what specious arguments the later Buddhist theology attempted to disregard the fatal contradiction that is here implied, and to solve the problem of how the earlier existence can possibly influence the later one if the soul has no concrete reality —in short, it tries to show how a soul which has no existence can be re-incarnated. We only want to comprehend all this in order to understand the peculiar characteristics of Buddha. His strength does not lie in the region of speculation; he passes by it as much as possible. Yet

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he cannot entirely leave it on one side, for his religious capacity is not sufficient for this. Thus his religion has, unfortunately, remained a conglomeration of profound personal religious experience, and only half complete philosophic speculation.

But we must follow Buddha into his true province, the really practical side of his religion. Here we meet with sayings of a highly simple and practical nature, easily comprehended. Even in his earliest preaching at Benares Buddha formulated his teaching with unequalled simplicity and precision. He announced the four holy verities of suffering. The first saying runs thus:

"This, oh ye monks, is the holy verity of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; to be united with an unloved one is suffering; to be separated from the beloved one is suffering; not to obtain what one desires is suffering; in fact, the five-fold chain which binds us to the earth is suffering."

The preaching of Buddha begins with the great song that all life is suffering; he fixes his glance firmly on this side of life, and sees this only. He, like his people, knew no future, no progress, no striving upwards, no bitter conflict. Very far from him was the thought that suffer-

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ing produces patience and engenders heroism, and that suffering may signify triumph and a higher life. The Buddha legend relates how, after the conversion of Buddha, he met an old man, a sick man, a putrefying corpse, and a venerable monk. "Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering." It is noticeable how little the root idea of Buddha's, "Life is suffering," has spread. The division between the will and the power, the struggle of the senses against our better judgment, the falling below the moral ideal—none of all this comes within the horizon of Buddha. He sees only the earthly life, and that life is suffering. Both he and his followers displayed true genius in the promulgation of this simple principle. The song of the suffering of life appears here illumined by the whole magic of its attractive, ensnaring beauty.

"Man gathers flowers, he yearns after pleasure. As a flood sweeps over a village by night, so death comes upon him and carries him away."

"Man gathers flowers, he yearns after pleasure. The destroyer forces the insatiable seeker after knowledge into his power."

"Not in the domain of pleasure, not in the depth of the sea, not even in the very heart of the mountain, wilt thou find on earth the place

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where the mighty power of death may not seize you."

"Sorrow is born from joy, and from joy cometh fear. He who is delivered from joy is delivered from sorrow, for whence should come fear?"

Buddha will deliver the world from this universal suffering. His sermon at Benares begins with the cry, "Listen, oh ye monks, deliverance from death has been found." The way of deliverance leads to the question concerning the origin of suffering. The second article of his creed runs:

"This, ye monks, is the sacred truth of the origin of pain. It is the desire for life which leads from re-incarnation to re-incarnation . . . the desire for pleasures, the desire for development, the desire for power."

To the question concerning the cause of suffering Buddhism gives a very simple answer, with which we are already familiar. The cause is the desire for existence, for individual existence. This longing not only penetrates into the sorrow of this life, but it affects also the re-incarnation in a later life. It links the individual existence for ever to this existence full of sorrow. It is clearly seen how this second principle of Buddhism is closely connected with the doctrine of re-incarnation, the origin and extent of which have been already noted.

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The third and fourth principle follow quite naturally from the first two. If the desire for existence is the cause of all suffering, then there can be only one way out of this suffering. The third verity says:

"This, oh you monks, is the sacred verity concerning the abolition of suffering. This passionate longing for existence can only be quenched by the absolute annihilation of all desires, by casting them away, by renunciation, by releasing oneself from them, by giving them no quarter."

The question as to how this deliverance takes place is answered by the fourth principle: "By means of this holy eightfold path, which is made up of right belief, right resolution, right speech, right deeds, a right life, right striving, right self-absorption."

In spite of all the wealth of language in this description of the road the most important point is not given, for it lies in what is not named here. The essential thing is purely inward and spiritual; there are no sacrifice, no ceremonial acts of worship, no penances, and no severe ascetism, only clear perception and its corresponding practical activity, which lead to the desired goal.

And what then is this desired goal? For the true Buddhist this is all summed up in the word

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Nirvana, eternal rest. When the desire for life is extinguished, Karma, the strong impulse which makes for re-incarnation, is also extinguished. Delivered from life, the believer attains after death—sometimes, indeed, before death—perfect peace. Is this Nirvana after death to be regarded more as positive blessedness than as purely negative, the mere cessation of life? Buddha avoids giving any answer to this question: it belongs to the category of things of little value. Be that as it may, the Buddhist believer in the doctrine of Nirvana is able to rise to a free, unconstrained frame of mind, full of joyous confidence.

"We live most joyously, without enemies in a world full of enmity; among hostile beings we tarry without hostility."

"Joyously we live healthily among the sick; among sick men we tarry without sickness."

"Joyously we who possess nothing live. Joy is our food, like that of the light-giving gods!"

"The monk who tarries in solitary places, whose soul is full of peace, enjoys supreme felicity and beholds the absolute truth."

The whole Buddhist religion is revealed in these simple sayings and maxims. But we must now more closely examine the meaning of "right activity," "right life," to which the fourth verity refers. The monastic life is

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the logical outcome of true Buddhist belief; the devout follower of Buddha becomes a monk. He forsakes his parents, his wife, his child, and all his possessions. He acknowledges the sacred trinity of Buddha, doctrine, and the community, that is to say, the monastic community. He takes as his symbol the yellow garb of penance and the beggar's wallet, and thus, without a home, he wanders from place to place, modest, calm, an unobtrusive example to all of true living. During the three months of rain the Buddhist monks assemble for intimate intercourse and pious meditation, all secular work being put on one side. Spiritual practices, the recitation of holy sayings, religious dogma, spiritual conversation, meditations, journeyings, and begging fill their lives. By the side of the organised monasticism, the followers of Buddha and his doctrines who could not resolve to become monks or were hindered from so doing, formed as it were a lay order. Remaining in the world, they yet acted up to their convictions by occupying themselves in practical benevolence on behalf of the monks. Yet—and this is very important—the true believer and pious man is according to Buddhism the monk alone. He alone attains *Nirvana*, eternal rest. The layman is certainly on the right

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road thither; he may hope in another life to become a monk and so attain Nirvana.

It is here, in the community of monks and its passionate desire for conversion, that the real moral power of Buddhism lies, if we consider the question of moral power a little more closely. It is characteristic that in the legends of Buddha it is related how at the decisive moment when he began his work he victoriously overcame in battle with the Evil One the temptation offered by his suggestion that when he had found deliverance in Nirvana he should immediately go thither himself without announcing it to the world. Buddha, out of love for unredeemed humanity, overcame his own personal need of rest and his fear of the troubles and sufferings of a missionary who announces a new truth. Sympathy with the misery of the world was a powerful impulse in him, and so sympathy forms the foundation of all Buddhist morality. He impressed his community of monks very thoroughly with this idea, in direct opposition to the Brahman priesthood. The Brahmanical priest and wise man, in his utter self-sufficiency, is quite content to have the higher life for himself and his own caste. The scholar absorbs himself in his speculations, the penitent in his deeds of virtue, both quite apart from the common herd. The

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adherents of Buddha spread the religious life, such as they possessed, far beyond the limits of caste, far beyond the people of India. With the joyous cry that they had found deliverance they wandered over the wide world. Buddhism developed into a world-mission. Far in the West, even into the Greek world, did the Buddhist monks wander; in the east and north of India, in Tibet, China, Japan, Further India, and beyond, has Buddhism planted itself firmly. It is still to-day a world-religion.

Herein lies the moral strength of Buddhism. Less valuable is its practical teaching concerning the morality of the world; yet here it shows in many particulars a wide and liberal comprehension of morality. It is accepted as a fact that in the first centuries after the rise of Buddhism the life of the people of India, as a whole, made fresh progress. Once again they had a history. But it has not yet been clearly shown whether the rise of the Buddhist religion is not merely one phenomenon of this universal progress, rather than its cause and origin. Nor is it quite certain how far it was influenced by the Greek culture, which was beginning to have its effects in the countries bordering on India and beyond. However this or that may be, this advance did not last long. The work of the world and the morality

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developed from it lies only on the outside of Buddhism. All this is regarded, as it were, as subordinate, the central idea and the final object remaining "flight from the world." Thus in attracting constantly the best and most profound minds, in calling away from the work of the world those who are striving upwards and aspiring to the higher life, by showing them the gate of deliverance, Buddhism has contributed at the same time to stagnation; for wherever it is the dominating religion civilisation and morality have stood still, have remained in a state of torpor and sunk deeper and deeper into spiritual death. In conclusion, it must be remembered, as has been already stated, that Buddhism is monachism, and in its essential nature *only* monachism. Tradition says that when Buddha had a son born to him he cried out: "This is a new and strong link which I shall have to break!"

Before we proceed to consider the essential character of the somewhat narrow religion of redemption, it will be well to compare with the Buddhist religion a phenomenon related to it in many important points. I refer to Plato and the attitude of the later Hellenic cultured world, so far as it was

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religious, which stands in close relation to the philosopher.

The period of the Persian wars signified to the Greeks, not only a national revival, but a religious one likewise.

Firmly believing in the old gods, the Greeks had preserved their freedom and their domination in face of the mighty advance of Persian rule. The old gods were still living, belief in them underwent a rebirth, and flourished anew in purified beauty. The contemporary tragedies of Æschylus are penetrated by a deep religious feeling. The gods are more than mortals, whose arrogance they humiliate. "Zeus, in glorifying thee in songs of praise there is peace for all men." But, on the other hand, from this time onwards the elements of disintegration more and more affected the old Hellenic culture. The civilisations of the various peoples came in contact with one another. In the leading town of Athens, during the course of the Persian wars, the democratic element conquered the agrarian and conservative elements. Instead of a power resting on a territorial army and a territorial aristocracy, Athens became a commercial and naval town of the first rank, which won the mastery at sea and in international trade. This marks progress. But this new world-civilisation of Athens, ever striving

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upwards, cast on one side all the fetters of custom and usage, even those of religious custom and religious usage. Peripatetic philosophers, world-wide travellers, announced that all things that had hitherto been considered the very foundations of common life were only chance happenings, mere examples of human arbitrariness and habit. We can trace the decay of the old religious strength step by step if we compare the dramas of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The greatness of the Periclean period was followed by a swift downfall of the Athenian power. Minds of the second rank more and more played a leading part in the common life, now robbed of its great features and inspiration. The more capable men no longer found scope for their influence in the conditions of life, ever becoming more circumscribed and limited. It was a period of sad resignation, of hesitation, and doubt. The foundations of the common life began to totter, new ones had not yet been found. The mass of the people, as well as a considerable number of superior minds, clung to the old beliefs in the gods, in whom in their innermost souls, however, they no longer trusted.

Thus the best men retired from public life. They carried with them the ruins of a worn-out

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but beautiful world, from which they hoped to create a new and better one.

Socrates sought to place human life, as lived in societies, once more on a firm foundation by basing it on reason, the principles of which are demonstrable and may be taught. We have already ventured to call Plato the religious reformer of Greece, although, it is true, his life's work consisted of many interests. Religion was not to him the one and only interest, but still he regarded it as the keystone and crown of the whole intellectual edifice which he built up.

We must examine a little more closely the life and ideas of this Platonic society. A little band of earnest men, who first gathered round Socrates and then round Plato, stood in sharp and ever-growing opposition to the public life of the majority. They could find no place for themselves in public life, with its narrowness, limitations, and restricted conditions, and so they withdrew into private life. For them the whole of the outside world—happily only in theory—with its rules and regulations had lost all validity, and they constructed for themselves, with bold and fantastic idealism, a State as it ought to be.

Here we find the main characteristic of the Platonic view of the world. This is the most

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profound pessimism and the deepest resignation towards the concrete world of experience, the absolute conviction of the necessary imperfection and slight value of the whole world subject to this experience of the senses. But where is this better world by which this empirical world may be measured? "It is here," answered Plato and his followers, "here, in the thought of the wise man; not in the irrational, arbitrary, fantastic imagination, but in the thought conformable to reason and law, in the thought of the idea. The thought of the wise man is a faithful reflection of the real, true world, the world which alone exists, which is not to be seen with the bodily eye, but with the eye of the spirit."

True and noble existence belongs to this world of ideas alone. The world of sensual experience is only a weak, imperfect picture of the perfect ideal world, a combination of light and darkness, a representation of the pure idea in an incomplete material form.

This, the main idea of Plato's philosophy, is also his religious conviction. For the exaltation of the wise man into the world of ideas is, in accordance with its deepest meaning, a religious act; the idea which lifts the wise man into this higher and true world is religious inspiration. It is Divine madness, holy en-

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thusiasm, so called by Plato, who was inclined to the purified and refined form of Orphic ecstatic piety, then very widespread. It is heavenly love, the heavenly Eros, the beautiful mother of earthly love, which lifts the wise man up into the higher, more beautiful, world. Only these powers could give to human reason wings to soar into the luminous world of ideas. And this world of ideas is the world of the gods, of the Godhead. The highest idea is the idea of the good, perfect, Divine Being.

How does it happen that the earthly being, man, bound by his earthly fetters, can yet strive upwards, far beyond his earthly existence, and reach a heavenly world? Man is a being of a dual, nay, a threefold or even a fourfold, nature. He consists of body and soul, and the soul, again, consists of two or three parts—the sensual side of his inner life, clearly defined, and falling into a higher and a lower (willing and desiring), and the higher life of pure clear reason, in no wise circumscribed by earthly limitations. Equipped with this highest, most spiritual part of his nature, man comes from the higher, true, and real life of ideas; he has sunk into the material world. Was it his own guilt, or was it a higher necessity? Opinions vary on this subject. In any case, man now dwells on this earth as in a

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prison. He finds himself, half dreaming and half waking, in a dark cavern through a crevice in which a dim light from afar penetrates, and in this feeble light he sees vague, gigantic, shadowy figures hovering around. This is life.

There has remained to man—who, having drunk of the waters of Lethe (forgetfulness), has quite forgotten his heavenly origin—remembrance, gradually evolving into consciousness. All learning is remembrance. The holy longing after the lost heaven has also remained. But the imprisonment is bitter, and of long duration, and strong are the fetters of the material world. In Platonism, as in Buddhism, the idea of the transmigration of souls and of re-incarnation derived from the popular belief, and directly taken from the Orphic worship, plays an important part. The souls that have fallen from their higher estate pass upwards and downwards in painful, confused wanderings, so that here also the deeds of an earlier life condition the existence of the following one. The whole idea, it is true, is not nearly so clear as in the Indian religion, but confusedly intermingled with the thought of compensation in a future life. Yet it is here as it is there.

But there does exist a means of freedom, a way upwards out of this painful cycle of life,

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and it is the wise man who finds this way. If he turns away from this world of the senses, and does not permit it to gain access to his innermost being, if he keeps his inward and spiritual eye ever directed to the world of the eternal idea, and thus allows his higher and reasonable self to be gradually strengthened, then even in this life he will be, to a certain extent, freed from the bonds of materialism; and after death his released spirit will mount upwards to higher and higher worlds, and will at last find freedom from the painful law of re-incarnation, and a return to the home of eternal light.

In considering now what Buddhism and Platonism (which have been very briefly described) have in common, we shall easily discern the general characteristics of the one-sided, clearly marked religions of redemption. We summarise these characteristics as follows:

1. In the religions of redemption the consciousness becomes clearly aware that in religion, besides the empirical daily life, conditioned by the facts of nature, there is another and a higher life. An earnest attempt is made to believe in this higher life, and to strive after it. In the national religions this perception is not expressed. Judaism and Islamism, contrasted

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with the higher aspirations of the prophetic period, represent a relapse from spiritual heights to material conditions. In the religions of redemption all external things, so far as a large circle of men is concerned, are abolished, and disappear; all supports, all outward means, all crutches, are no longer of any value. Religion rises to the height of pure spirituality and inwardness, to the idea of unity and entity. Thus it breaks down and oversteps the limits of nationality. Platonism and Buddhism are in their very nature international.

2. This thought of a higher life which faith gives is presented to us in both religions in a one-sided and distorted form. The highest good of Buddhism is *Nirvana*—that is, absolute negation of this life; its highest object is "freedom from life." Platonism, in the same way, denies all life which is conformable to experience, and, above all, any practical dealing with it; the only thing of real value which it finds in life is the intellectual element. Its highest aim is a life of undisturbed reason, of untroubled perception, of the pure idea. The ideal of life in the one case is that of the monk, in the other the philosopher, far removed from all matters of daily life.

3. With this complete or half-complete nega-

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tion of human life there vanishes the vital thought of a God. When the human *ego* disappears, the Divine Being also disappears, or grows dim. In Platonism the idea of the Godhead is highly abstract and mystical; in Brahminism the Godhead is the universal being, not to be closely defined, in opposition to the individual existence, which is necessarily painful; in Buddhism the thought of God is entirely abandoned, the object of belief vanishing when the personality vanishes.

4. The natural consequence of this is that in both religions the specially moral element is relegated to an inferior position. We have seen how in Buddhism the doctrine of suffering rests entirely on the consideration of life on earth and all its limitations; how the idea of moral deficiency and imperfection, of the agony of sin and the need for redemption from sin, is quite unknown. In Platonism, also, the highest faculty of the human being is not the will towards the good, but the clear reason which lasts for ever. What hinders and fetters mankind is not moral evil, but the material world. Of course it must not be imagined that in both these great and universal phenomena (Buddhism and Platonism) the moral element has not reached a high degree of culture, but there is lacking any real union of religion and

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morality. The essential thing and the highest thing which that religion offers and promises to mankind lies quite apart from good and evil.

5. Connected with this one-sided attitude of the religions of redemption towards life and moral acts is the peculiar relation they assume towards the people who are their believers. Buddhism conquered a whole series of nations of a very different kind, and it still rules them to a certain extent. On all sides the same phenomenon is apparent. We see everywhere that the Buddhist religion has only intermingled with the life of the people in an entirely superficial manner, just as oil rests on the surface of the water. Buddhism, apart from slight changes, has everywhere remained the same with a wearisome monotony; it has remained the religion of the monk. By its side it has permitted to remain, uninterrupted and unpurified, the existing condition of affairs, with its customs and habits, its morality and even its belief. With the exception of Tibet, perhaps, Buddhism has nowhere become the religion which penetrated the life of the people through and through. The Greek philosophic religion of the cultured likewise never had the strength to become the religion of the people; it remained the possession of

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a small and narrow circle, and had not the courage to reform the belief of the Greek people. It made weak compromises, by which it justified itself in its own sight when, in the practical conduct of life, it once more bowed to custom and usage and to a belief which it inwardly regarded as inferior. Buddhism met with a very similar fate; wherever it became the religion of the people it generally sank into complete pagan superstition, especially into a superstitious and fetich-like worship of relics. The exaggerated spirituality of the religions changes into its exact opposite; movements which began with the rejection of all that was considered of value in the people's belief bow finally to its power.

Thus we see how from the age of the prophets the history of religion follows two lines—the religions of the law and the religions of redemption. In the former there exists a close connection between morality and religiousness, and the conviction that piety is synonymous with acts in accordance with God's will. But this close connection is destroyed by the power of custom, right, observance which steps in and causes religion to be brought down to the level of everyday life, and entangled in the things of the material world. Thus the perception that the higher life is chiefly developed by piety is

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almost lost sight of. The religions of redemption established very clearly the idea of a higher life, but as they conceived this higher life in its narrowness and in its sharp contrast to the actual life, the moral element lost its decisive significance, and religious good came to exist apart from good and evil.

Wherever these two lines meet; where a religion can avoid the narrowness which characterises both types of religion, and combine their good points; where the idea of redemption is united with the moral element—there we shall have the perfect form of a religion. We will now see whether the Christian religion satisfies these postulates.

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CHAPTER VII

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

MORE than half a century was to elapse from the period of the prophets before religion experienced a new and higher development which was for the time being definitive.

This development did not come without preparation. The nations along the Mediterranean and beyond in the East had already entered upon a life in common. Alexander the Great had ruled and had carried Greek culture far into the East. If the East was influenced by the West, it must be remembered the East opened its treasures to the West. In the interchange which took place between East and West there began a new life of inconceivable plenitude and richness. A common language, the Hellenic, united the nations; an Hellenic culture, intermingled with many foreign elements, began to dominate the world. The heritage of the Greeks took the place of the

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world-empire of the Romans. The work of Cæsar, and more especially of Augustus, a new and secure order of things arose from the threatened chaos. . .There ensued once again a great and universal revival in the intellectual life of man. Secure social conditions, extreme outward order and harmony, a marvellously facilitated and regulated international intercourse, a flourishing world-commerce, a revival in art, literature, science—it was into such a world that Christianity came. In the provinces especially Augustus was glorified as the deliverer and the saviour.

The religious life of mankind at this time was also a life in common. We are confronted with many great and influential religions. There is the later Greek religion, due to Plato, of the cultured men of the Græco-Roman empire, with its contrast between the ideal and the real world, and its lofty pæan of the eternal home of the soul; the Babylonian religion, with its astrological fatalism and its *mantik*, which influenced the West; the half-stagnant Egyptian religion, with its belief in magic, significant of a lower stage of civilisation, as well as its worship of Isis-Osiris (Serapis), the judge in a future life. Then we have the Persian religion which began to penetrate into the West as the religion of

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Mithra, and, most important of all the religions in its significance and results, the Jewish religion, which with the extension of the Jewish nation was established in almost all the larger towns of the Græco-Roman empire, and carried on an extended and successful propaganda. Finally, there were hybrid religions of all kinds.

These religions overstepped the boundaries of nationalities mostly in the curious form of secret societies—severe religious sects which encompassed themselves with mystery similar in some ways to the familiar, yet unfamiliar, phenomenon of freemasonry. Everywhere there is displayed a tendency towards both universalism and individualism. The individual searches for and strives after things for himself, quite apart from the things appertaining to his nation; he accepts whatever comes. Religion is a matter for the individual, a matter of conviction. In most of these religions the extremely personal belief in a future retribution becomes the central idea, and with it is united a most pessimistic attitude towards this life. The thought of redemption, of belief in a redeeming God, now begins to play the most important part in these religions. On all sides the connection between these tendencies is seen. The national, polytheistic

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elements are not finally overcome; religion still remains fettered by customs and ceremonies. Curious secret rites, mysterious consecrations, sacramental acts, senseless practices and penances, deeds of magic, and spiritism are the widespread characteristics of the religious life.

In this development of the common religious life, Judaism, the religion which has already been referred to as the most significant of all religions, Judaism, which gave birth to Christianity, participated. In spite of its particularistic aloofness, the Jewish religion was swept along by the universal, spiritual currents, and, indeed, the advance here was especially vital and clear. The tendency towards universalism, the process of freeing religion from the nation and the national sacrificial worship, the emphasis laid upon individualism, the thought of judgment, the pessimistic attitude towards the world, now and then amounting to dualism (belief in the devil), were especially strongly displayed in Judaism. Here, also, the narrowness of these tendencies is clearly seen. Although Judaism now spread all over the world, and began to carry on a world-propaganda, the religion still remained chained to the Jewish nation. It freed itself gradually from the national worship, only to become all

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the more entangled in ceremony and legal casuistry. It was on the way to becoming a matter for the individual, a personal conviction, but once more it falls into a blind obedience to the letter of the law. The idea of a personal judgment is evolved, but the national hope, with its passionate fanaticism, prevails. New expressions of the religious life arise: a collection of sacred writings, a spiritual worship of God without ceremonial observances, an appointed order of prayer, and, at the same time, new fetters and burdens, the domination of erudition in piety, the domination of the letter and of the external in the innermost recesses of the religious life.

Into this world was delivered the Gospel: Jesus and His preaching appeared on the horizon. At the first glance it is not easy to estimate the relation of this new phenomenon to the past. Everything that is to be found in the Gospel is to be found somewhere or other in the past religious history of the Jewish people, though only in a primitive form. Learned Jews are accustomed to point with pride to this "dependence" of the Gospel on Judaism. With justice the retort has been made that the Jewish Rabbis had indeed said all that Jesus said; but, unfortunately, they said so much else besides. It is in its simplicity

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that the nature of the higher religion is revealed; the classic is always the simple. Simplification means, at the same time, the deliverance from the burdens of the past. We must now consider more closely this great process of deliverance.

First of all, Jesus freed religion from nationality: Judaism spells fetters, Christianity freedom. At the first glance, this statement may appear extraordinary, for throughout His life and work Jesus appears united to His own people. He refuses to heal the Canaanitish woman because he has only been sent to the lost sheep of Israel. The immediate disciples of Jesus were opposed to heathen missions, which were the work of the Apostle Paul. Yet, in spite of this, deliverance from nationalities is to be found in the Gospel of Jesus. But it was an inward redemption; Jesus ever remained a faithful son of His nation, but He delivered His faith from merely national interests. This sprang from the very centre of His religion. We can best comprehend this if we realise the essential idea of the preaching of Jesus, the idea of the kingdom of God. What did this hope of the kingdom of God signify to the Judaism of His time? Above all, it signified hope in a time when the people of Israel should be

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victorious and should succeed to world-wide domination; when it should trample upon the hated Roman empire; when a king from the race of David should rule over Palestine, over Jerusalem, and far over the wide world; when the heathen should pay tribute, the prisoners of Israel be freed, Jerusalem built up gloriously again—a period in which God should rule over His people on earth and dwell with the faithful. What became of this belief in the preaching of Jesus? It was glorified and transfigured The kingdom which Jesus looked forward to was indeed the reign of God, a condition of affairs in which God's will was done in heaven and on earth, when the pious should see God, should experience mercy, and should live in eternal joy—Jesus speaks quite calmly of material joys—in community with God. All the other elements of the Jewish national hope fall completely into the background. And if these notes are now and again struck, they are, as it were, the last sounds of an old song that is dying away. Thus Jesus freed the belief in the future life, and with this belief piety, from any thought of the Jewish nation.

A generation later Paul accomplished the external deliverance from nationality. He was the first to utter exultingly the saying that brought freedom: "There can be neither Jew

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nor Greek, bond nor free." But this world-propaganda of Paul was not an absolutely new thing, it was only an organised extension, an external development of what existed in the preaching of Jesus. Since the days of Paul the international character of Christianity has remained unassailable.

In place of the nation the individual now entered exclusively into his rights. Judaism was, and remained, above everything else, a national religion, even though it was often intermingled with individualistic elements. The Gospel is primarily pure, intense individualism. The great Danish writer Kierkegaarde once expressed the thought, certainly somewhat exaggerated, that the Gospel thinks in the "category of the individual." Aloof from all sects, from "good society," Jesus went among the despised, the rejected, and the solitary, the sinners and the publicans. He told the worthy religious people that there was more joy in heaven over one sinner who repented than over ninety-nine pious men. Jesus brings the individual face to face with his choice, with the idea of judgment; He places him under the great eye of God, who may condemn him, body and soul, to hell. He tells the individual that he carries his fate in his own hands, and that his life is worth more than all the

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treasures of the world. In the Gospel the redemption of the individual is accomplished.

The second great deliverance which Jesus effected was the freeing of religion from ceremonial observances. This assertion may at first seem extraordinary, for Jesus Himself said He had not come to dispense with the law but to fulfil it, and that the smallest letter of the law must be obeyed. Yet, if we examine into the matter more closely, we see that He accomplished an inner deliverance. There is no revolutionary attack, no destruction of forms—it is a question of doing this thing and not omitting that. Yet these forms were no longer of any value to Him and His real life; He filled His own soul and His disciples' souls with higher things. He could quietly wait until all the burdens of the law and the useless accumulations which had gathered round it had, so far as His followers were concerned, sunk into darkness and dimness. Only on one point was He inexorable; in one point His kingly, warlike nature showed itself. When the lower and unessential things which wanted to make themselves prominent threatened the higher life with injury, then He fought in the manner of the old prophets. He destroyed the law in favour of love and mercy. Duty to parents was of more value than sacrifice,

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reconciliation than worship at the altar; faithfulness, mercy, and upright judgment are more than the giving of tithes.

With the deliverance from ceremonial man was delivered from the letter of the law. Here, also, Jesus showed Himself the devout Son of His race. To Him the Old Testament is the Holy Scripture; He trusts it absolutely; He proves many things from it. But in His soul He was free. To Him religion is a whole, a unity, not a series of definitions depending on the letter of the law. And wherever the Scriptures and tradition run counter to His ideas He argues in a new and incredibly bold manner. From a command of Moses He appeals to the eternal laws created by God. He ventures to say: "You have heard that it was said of old—— But I tell you." In His sight there is no piety of the letter, no command from the past. Side by side with the Scriptures stands experience which He gains Himself, with clear eyes, in the life of nature and of men.

At the same time He delivered religion from erudition. His bitterest opponents were those learned in the law, the theologians. To Jesus religion, theoretical and practical, was something infinitely simple, not in the least anything that was studied. He dethroned the learned men. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven

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and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes." On the simple people He made the impression which is summarised in the saying: "He preaches as one inspired, and not as the doctors."

Reference has already been made to the fact that the process of deliverance begun by Jesus was completed by Paul. Paul drew the deduction, Christ is the end of the law. He expresses this in the marvellous saying, the magic saying with which he comprehends the innermost nature of Christianity: "With freedom did Christ set us free." But when we compare the freedom of Jesus and Paul, Jesus appears as more free. He was truly free, so free that He continued to bear great burdens without thinking of getting rid of them, so filled with living fire that His life was not stifled by the mass of rubbish which He did not clear away. The fetters had eaten deep into the soul of Paul before he cast them on one side. The freedom of the Gospel works from within outwards; it is not a breaking away, and a violent breach with the external, but a quiet germinating and growing within, slow but absolutely certain.

Thus Jesus is the Deliverer. Jesus delivered religion from all national claims, from all

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national fetters, from ceremonial, from the letter of the law, and from the domination of erudition.

With simplicity and purity the true inward meaning of the Gospel is now revealed: in unfettered strength faith in God flows onward freely and powerfully. Judaism had comprehended God as the strong, supernatural, awe-inspiring God to whom mankind must bow in absolute obedience, and this terrible, sublime God still serves as the background for Jesus's faith and piety. He knows personally this terrible, almighty God through His own personal experience. His God had given Him no success in His life; mystery beyond all other mystery, He had endured in His life misunderstanding and enmity, anguish and neglect, persecution and dark forebodings of death, faithlessness and treachery from His own disciples. Yet here arises, in unquenchable power, the victorious cry of faith: "And yet I believe"; here takes place "the casting into the abyss." To this mysterious God, high in the heavens, Jesus was ever able to say, "My Father," and He taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven"; with a childlike, bold confidence He submitted to the guidance of the heavenly Father, and accepted life with all its enigmas and sufferings, which He had

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experienced as no other ever had. And in imitation of Him His greatest disciple exultingly pronounced the defiantly bold saying, "We glory in our sufferings."

And just as Jesus vanquished and transfigured the belief of the religion of the law in a remote, harsh, incomprehensible God, so the belief in God which He preached was immeasurably superior to that held by the religions of redemption. Let us, for a moment, for the purpose of comparison, cast our glance back at the Brahminical belief in God, Buddhistic belief not being apposite here. Brahmanism, as a religion, rests on the weakening of the consciousness of the dignity of the spiritual life and personality. The Hindoo feels, especially in his religion, that he is merely a living being, closely connected with all nature around him; hence God appears to him as the one indefinable existence, and his chief religious idea is the conviction that the individual life is necessarily one of suffering, and so he longs after union with this universal, indefinable Being. The teaching of the Gospel, on the contrary, rests on the most profound sense of the dignity and individuality of human life, though this belief is not always pronounced in so many words. In truth, for Jesus, there exists man only, although He casts

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on Nature a clear and comprehending glance, far superior to that of the Hindoo. Nature, the life of the lower beings, is chiefly of interest to Him because He sees in it symbols of human life and its laws. He does not reduce human life to the level of the life of Nature. He elevates the natural, in the form of parables, to the height of the spiritual. Belief in God is expressed in the same symbolical manner. When He constantly calls God "Father," and contrasts God as a personal Being with the human being, this is only meant as a hesitating, incomplete description of the mysterious, all-powerful, all-comprehensive nature of God, merely a symbol. But the Gospel expresses in unsurpassed fashion the idea that the nature of God is not that of a universal, impersonal existence; and that, although His deepest nature is beyond our comprehension, we approach nearest to the truth when we understand God as personal energy infused with spirituality, His nature conforming more to this idea than to that of natural existence. In comprehending God as the Creator, the Doer, the Preserver, as the Father of our spiritual and higher nature, the Gospel at the same time carries the personal energy of the human being to its highest development. Thus the belief taught in the Gospel has superseded the

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belief of the religions of the law and of redemption.

And now, at last, in this belief of the Gospel we have that close and wonderful connection between religion and morality to which the higher religions strove to attain, yet failed to reach in its entirety. To Jesus there was only one true connecting link between the spiritual and the moral—right doing. God is good, and no one but God alone is good; he who will find God must seek Him in good. To the woman who with spiritual enthusiasm presses towards Him, and calls the mother of such a son blessed, Jesus answered, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Jesus drew many connecting lines between religion and morality. First of all He took over from Judaism the mighty idea of judgment: "I will warn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." And He liberated this thought of judgment from all connection with nations, from all antagonisms between nations, and sects, and parties. Naked and alone Jesus placed the individual before the eternal judgment of God. He liberated the idea from the pharisaical casuistical setting which belonged to it in Judaism. The judgment did not depend on works but on the motive: a good tree brings forth

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good fruit. He freed it also from all idea of external rewards, from bargaining and haggling with God. With unsurpassed simplicity and convincing power Jesus taught His disciples: "When ye have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."

Jesus gives a still deeper basis to this connection between religion and morality. The belief in God the Father is not only a gift of God through which man is freed from the anguish and burden of life, but it is also an obligation. Belief in the Fatherhood of God implies the relationship of father and child. *Noblesse oblige.* The children are to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect; this is the will of the good God. To fulfil the will of the heavenly Father is the very quintessence and substance of the belief in the Fatherhood of God.

A morality purified and free from all ceremonial, from all insignificant legal and casuistical rules and regulations, from all subordinate and external details, is, in the Gospel, closely connected with a pure religion cleansed of all subordinate matters.

At this point an objection may be raised. This is directed against what is called the purely spiritual, ascetic morality of the Gospel. It is

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pointed out that the Gospel assumes a hostile attitude towards human life and the work of civilisation. It is quite true that Jesus and His disciples lived with their thoughts and their hopes turned towards another world. Jesus in clear language preached the doctrine of *Sursum corda*. Treasure was not to be laid up on earth, but only in heaven. The Gospel paid little attention to the various forms of human life as it is lived in common—in the family, in professions, in the nation, in the State. Jesus freed Himself and His disciples from all ties of the family, the home, and daily life for the sake of greater and higher objects. He forbade all care—all, be it noted, and not merely the superfluous care—for the morrow. The riches of this world were, in His eyes, a danger to man's soul; on no account must a moral value be attached to them. Law and authority were natural necessities, but of no moral value. He stood in sharp opposition to the degenerate civilisation of His time. He lived, it must be remembered, in a period of complete decay, and the idea of secular work on behalf of His people and His fatherland must have necessarily been remote from His mind. All effort in that direction would have been in vain. Once more, to state the matter shortly, Jesus, in the Gospel, did not direct His thoughts

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towards the value of this world, although His immeasurably rich nature scattered many a germinating seed. He pointed man to eternity. All human things, the finest possessions, are simply regarded as the material by means of which God's will may be done. It is on this concentration of view and this austerity that the peculiarity, the power, and the greatness of Christ's teaching rest.

But we must also look at the matter from another point of view. A comparison with the somewhat narrow religions of redemption is particularly valuable in this connection. Jesus, unlike Buddha, never declared that life was an evil, nor, like Plato, did He ever preach that the pious wise man must above all avoid the ordinary, every-day life. Jesus founded no order of monks. This is all the more remarkable as there was in His lifetime something in the nature of an order of monks in the Jewish religion, the sect of the Essenes. Nothing is more clear than the difference between Jesus and His disciples and these curious, ascetic, holy men, who were obliged to cleanse themselves in water if they came in contact with any one who did not belong to their sect. Jesus established no school. He did not go, like John the Baptist, into the desert. He led His life and worked among the ordinary circumstances of everyday

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life. His parables show how well he understood the common life, and with what loving eyes He regarded it. With the same energy as He employed in directing His disciples towards God, He taught them their duties in a moral life lived among others: "Thou shalt love thy God and thy neighbour as thyself." And thus, because in the Gospel the established order of things is not abolished, but rather, through its direct relation with religious things, brought to its highest power and capacity for expression, the Gospel really and truly evinces no hostile tendency whatever toward this earthly life and its work.

This view is confirmed by a study of the history of Christianity. The Gospel, in the beginning, knew and recognised only the essence of all established modes of life, the simple, direct relations between man and man. It cared nothing for the forms in which custom revealed itself. Early Christianity, in conflict with an opposing world, showed itself hostile to culture. But the world and its work pressed powerfully against Christianity. Christianity split into two divisions—a secular Church which made peace with human culture, and an ascetic monasticism. After fifteen hundred years a step forward was made by means of the German Reformation, which abolished both monasticism

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and a Church striving for worldly rule. The Reformation taught that man may serve God in doing the work of the world. Christianity was able to bear all these changes, and the Reformation marks no step backward, but a healthy progress. Thus, in considering this part of history, we venture confidently to pronounce the judgment that the morality of the Gospel is not ascetic and inimical to culture. It accepts, in principle, human life and all the work appertaining to it because it accepts the morality revealed by it.

But this does not by any means exhaust the wealth of the Gospel. Morality is only one focus in its ellipse; the other is the idea of redemption. Jesus did not merely strengthen to the highest point His disciples' moral courage and moral determination. He did not merely cry out to them: "You must be perfect." He put before them the problem of how to be perfect. He stepped forth with the cry of "Do penance; repent." He knew that morality was conflict; He knew that as soon as the Divine "Thou shalt" began to stream through the consciousness of man, earth-born man would oppose this voice, and then a mortal combat would arise. He knew that in this conflict we should never reach the goal appointed for us.

And *because* He knew this Jesus revealed to

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His people a God of forgiveness, a God who does not look to the performances but is content with the disposition that begets goodwill, and daily He forgives sins. Here the Gospel of Jesus reaches its supreme height. On this high level stands the parable of the prodigal son. On the one hand the sin-laden human being in utter abandonment and degradation, who has wandered far from his home, and on the other the strong Divine love, which once again receives the lost, ruined son without reproaches or conditions, without accepting the self-reproaches of the son. He receives him with cordial, heartfelt joy, with a feeling of thankfulness. It is this love which the worthy self-righteous elder son regards as a paradox, almost as an injustice: "Oh! love, love, thou art mighty!"

It is not only in parables that Jesus revealed this Divine love which can make the impossible possible; He lets it influence Him in His own life. Wherever the faintest spark is still glimmering, wherever there exists in an utterly ruined life a hidden longing and seeking, and a last despairing cry rises upward, Christ kindles the glimmering spark, He transforms the fading evening glow into the dawn of a new life. Jesus, the friend of publicans and sinners, scorned by the superior people!

Thus in the very centre of the Christian

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religion stands the thought of redemption, the belief that when man aspires to God the old passes away, and a new life is born. In the religion of the law this thought had only been vital as a hope of the actual political deliverance of the people. In this respect Christianity stands side by side with the religions of redemption. Yet its belief in redemption is peculiar. It is not here a matter of "Get rid of life," nor of "Get rid of the material experience of the senses"; it is "Get free from sin." God in His fatherly goodness forgives sins. Christianity as a moral religion of redemption stands at the head of all religions.

The idea of redemption appears to be completed by the idea of a future life. Redemption will be accomplished in another and a higher life in which the pure in heart shall see God, and shall be entirely relieved from the burden of care and misery and from all moral imperfection. It is true that on the threshold of that life stands the judgment, but Jesus taught His disciples not to be frightened at that. He taught them to think of the future life as a better, higher home, for which indeed they must not forget this earthly life, nor neglect to do this world's work as long as it is day.

Now all this is not laid down in the Gospel

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as a doctrine, but is concentrated in a portrait of extraordinary power and significance.

When we consider the figure of Jesus from this point of view, we shall see that He Himself was perfectly aware of the significance of His personality to His disciples. However uncertain may be the sources of our knowledge concerning Christ's consciousness of His work, and however controversial the question may still be as to whether Jesus regarded Himself as the Messiah of His nation—and even if we answer this question in the affirmative, it is very difficult to say *in what way* Jesus regarded Himself as the Messiah of His people—yet all the more brightly shines forth from the Gospels the immense and authoritative consciousness of Christ's personality. He feels He is infinitely superior to all those who have arisen among His own people; He is conscious that in Him the voice of God speaks finally and decisively to the heart of His people, and that after that there is the Judgment Day. In kingly fashion He disposes of the holy tradition come down from Moses. He is greater than Jonah and Solomon, greater than prophets and kings or the Temple of Jerusalem. He knew how to rule over His own; He called to them and they came; He snatched the disciples from the chains riveted

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by family or calling, and cried, "Let the dead bury their dead." He ventured, in spite of the opposition of those in good society, into the company of the sinners, the despised and the rejected; He dared to do this, for He stood above all calumny. He possessed a spiritual power which affected the very physical life of man, and when He was at the height of His influence, surrounded by those who trusted Him utterly, He said to the lame man, "Arise and walk!" and he did walk. He called all those who were weary and heavy-laden to Himself, for He felt possessed of power and healing. He turned to the assembled multitude and said, "If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his own father and mother, he cannot be My disciple." He dared to say such a thing! With certain death before Him He gathered together His disciples, and united their life to His in the Last Supper and its symbolism. He suffered the death of the criminal, but His spiritual and moral glory consecrated even the shameful death on the cross as the holiest symbol of humanity. The very nature of His subjection lifted Him high above the greatest leaders of men in the domain of the spiritual life. In the presence of the incomparable glory of His cross the glory of all others fades away.

And in no other religion has a personality

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ever won a significance in any way approaching that of Christ's in the Christian religion. He maintained His power over His disciples' souls beyond death and the grave. After a brief period of the deepest despondency, the disciples, with the eyes of faith, saw Him in their midst; with illuminating power His picture rose before their minds, visible and actual, as only something actual can appear. Then came Easter and Whitsuntide. And there where Jesus had apparently been subjected to a shameful death they planted the flag of victory, and the cross became the symbol of honour, the crucifixion the most powerful of God's miracles.

How many changes and alterations has not Christianity experienced since then, and how many wrappings and coverings has she not put on and taken off again! And in the plenitude of forms in which this Religion has revealed herself, the one idea common to them all was the reverence paid to the personality of Jesus, or at any rate the hearty desire to cling to it. Although it was often concealed by worthless coverings, often disfigured and distorted, Christianity was yet powerful enough again and again to cast on one side the rubbish of tradition; and wherever Christianity has struck out a new path in her journey it has been because the personality of Jesus had again

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become living, and a ray from its Being had once more illumined the world. And we children of an historic age, to whom God through long and constant care has given knowledge and the ability to see, so that we perceive the figures of the past more clearly and distinctly than the people of any previous age—we stand overjoyed and delighted with the fulness of life in that Being, and we trace in this personality a power which is still able to influence our lives vitally, powerfully, intensely.

All this lies deep in the very nature of the Gospel. The Gospel everywhere directs us towards community of social life, community of spiritual life, which survives the centuries. Buddhism, Platonism, cast the individual—whether he be monk or philosopher—back on himself. In Christianity, with all its individuality, everything rests on the community. Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, Paul the Church. The community is the holy building of the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. Christ during the centuries has walked through the world with His people.

In our investigations concerning the nature of Christianity we have hitherto confined our attentions mainly to its beginnings. But these do not embody the whole of Christianity.

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Christianity has had a history, corresponding to the greatness of its power to form and organise communities, such as no other religion has ever had. Judaism since the period of the New Testament has only had a history of stagnation; the Hellenic religion one of annihilation, of absorption into Christianity; the Parsee religion has continued to exist with some ten thousand adherents. Buddhism only had a genuine history of spiritual might during the first centuries of its existence. Islamism experienced in the Middle Ages almost a more powerful development than the Christianity of the day, but since then stagnation appears to have overtaken it. Christianity alone has had a great and mighty history up till our own day.

Now, this history shows us how Christianity has been able to amalgamate with the life of the nations as no other religion has ever done. No other religion has ever possessed this power. Buddhism, in the monotonous form of monasticism, established itself as part of the life of the people without really influencing it. Islamism assumed among the separate nations such different forms that it can scarcely be said to have formed a spiritual unity. Christianity unfolded itself in an abundance of forms, varied, vital, yet all connected. The

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Gospel, or at any rate the largest part of it, is purely subjective; whenever it assumed the form conditioned by the age this was merely a transparent veil. And its spiritual force was always so strong and powerful that again and again it was able to create from the contemporary world around it the outer covering, the body, which—in spite of all the changes it went through—preserved its true nature and its productive power. Thus the teaching of the Gospel has permeated the life of the people, and in manifold ways has expanded into a great number of religions, which, nevertheless, all spring from the same root.

An attempt will now be made to sketch the main outlines of this further development of Christianity. The Gospel passed through its period of greatest expansion at the beginning; it is linked to the person of Christ's greatest disciple, to Paul, the great Apostle of the heathen.

Paul before all else was the means of carrying the Gospel from Palestine into the Græco-Roman world of culture, from the Semitic to the Indo-Germanic race. Through him the Gospel originally proclaimed in the Aramaic language became native to the Greek world. In many ways Paul continued his Master's work in splendid fashion. In him was accomplished

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the great process of religious freedom. Paul finally freed religion from the nation; he burst the last fetters which bound the young and aspiring religion to Judaism. He freed piety from the fetters of observance, of ceremony. "Christ is the end of the law."

He comprehended Christianity as a Church, as a new, spiritual religious community which united the people; and in his preaching of the Spirit of God which animates Christians he expresses in comprehensive fashion the true inwardness and freedom, the unity and entity of the Christian life as opposed to the Jewish ideal of the law.

But the Gospel experienced in and through the person of Paul not only a happy expansion, but also essential changes and dislocations of its elements.

1. The most important and the most essential of these was that there was evolved from Jesus' simple Gospel of God and His love to sinners belief in Christ. In His preaching—I shall return to this subject later—and in His whole manner of life Jesus erected a clear barrier between God and Himself. He never demanded faith in Himself in the sense He demanded faith in God. But even in the first community of Christians, belief in Christ, who would return to judge the world, became the central

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idea; as Judge of the world Christ already, in a certain sense, took the place of God. Paul continued this process. He never actually spoke of the divinity of Christ; indeed, he drew a clearly recognised distinction between God and Christ, and spoke of a time when, Christ having given back to God His power, God should be all in all, and Christ the first-born among the brethren. Nevertheless it is quite certain that to Paul the Christian belief meant belief in Christ as a God, and that he considered Christ as a pre-existing heavenly Being, the image of God. It cannot be denied that on the one hand a great truth is contained in these formulæ of Paul. The absolute significance of the person of Christ to His community is here expressed with perfect definiteness; Christ means to His people, in accordance with His nature, more than any of the other leaders in spiritual life, with whom He is not comparable. But, on the other hand, in the deification of the person of Jesus, in the comprehension of Christ as a supernatural being of a kind absolutely different to us, a dangerous path was opened up, along which Christianity was to lose its way in a multitude of confused speculations.

2. From this time onwards Paul's specific idea of redemption was developed. Paul's idea

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of redemption may be very briefly summarised. The race of man, from the time of Adam onwards, is, on account of its sensual, carnal nature, chained with the iron fetters of necessity to sin and death, and in the manifestations of both heathenism and Judaism it sank deeper and deeper into the depths of sin and destruction. A spark of higher life exists in man, but this, his better self, is powerless by itself. So the Redeemer, a Being of another and a higher kind, the second spiritual man, descended from the heavenly heights into the darkness of earth, in order to deliver us from the degrading domination of the flesh, sin, and death, and to bring us into the world of freedom, purity, and spirit. These ideas are very far removed from the simple Gospel. A whole new world of ideas has been built upon the Gospel. In this Gospel of Paul we hear clearly the echo of Platonic conceptions and piety. In the sharp distinction drawn between the material, concrete world and the spiritual world; in the pessimistic judgment of this world; in the proclamation that the better, higher self of man lies captive in the bonds and fetters of the flesh; in the intense longing for (physical) freedom from these bonds ("Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24), Paul and the great Greek philosopher come into touch with one

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another. Not, of course, that Paul has in any sense copied Plato; the ethical character of the religion of salvation preached by Paul stands in the forefront, and instead of the Platonic wise man who delivers himself, there is the central idea of Christ as the Deliverer. It was a great work that Paul accomplished. Here for the first time is shown the capacity of Christianity—on which its universality rests—to amalgamate with the great and noble ideas and feelings of the people with whom it is brought in contact. Yet at the same time we have here a development and an elaboration of the simple Gospel which obliges us to ask whether we are right in considering these manifestations as the definitive, final expression of the Gospel.

3. Paul's idea of redemption gains a still further specific stamp in that he connects it with the fact of Christ's death. To the disciples the death of Christ was a great and mysterious problem, and it remained so even after belief in the risen Christ had triumphed. At first the idea of an external salvation was accepted, and believers turned to the prophecies of the Old Testament in which they believed the death and agony of the Messiah were recorded. Soon, however, apparently before the time of Paul, the idea of redemption was expressed in "The

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death of Christ is the sacrifice for our sins." In an age and in a land where it was accepted as a matter of course that God was honoured by sacrifice, and that the sacrifice had the power of atoning for sins, the growth of a belief in the atoning sacrificial significance of Christ's death is absolutely comprehensible. And intermingled with it was a second thought, the thought of the value and significance of martyrdom. In that wonderful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah this idea is expressed for the first time in marvellous fashion. It is a great and Divine law that mankind rises to its best and noblest through sufferings and agonies, that the individual suffers for the many, the just for the unjust. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." In the great period of martyrdom during the Syrian religious persecutions, when the Maccabees rose in triumph this idea once again became vital. Jesus was probably thinking of this when He said that He gave His own life as a ransom for many, and told His disciples, through the symbol of the Last Supper, that His death was for their benefit. These ideas, already closely connected with one another, were accepted by Paul. It would appear that all that was new in his teaching was the central

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position, and the importance given to the Gospel of salvation. And now for the first time there arose the harsh dogma that God could not pardon sin without the sacrificial death of Christ, that the curse of the Law could *only* be removed by the vicarious sufferings of the just. This dogma gives the absolutely rational answer to the problem of Christ's crucifixion.

But at what a price! If Paul had been bold enough to consider his sufferings and the sufferings of every Christian as analogous to those of Christ, and thus softened the harshness of that conception, the conception would have gradually vanished entirely. Thus it came about that, instead of the Gospel's categorical imperative directed towards the individual ("Do that, so shalt thou live"), belief in the fact of salvation accomplished for us occupied the central position in Christianity.

4. An essential alteration of the simple Gospel in the time of Paul is signified by the incorporation of specific sacramental acts into the Christian life of the community. Sacraments, according to the commonly accepted view, are sacred concrete acts, through which spiritual gifts of grace are transmitted to man by mechanical means, or it may be by personal belief, personal deeds. We have already become acquainted with this

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belief in the efficacy of the material medium in religion in the religious life of mankind at a lower stage of civilisation. It is a characteristic of religious decadence and of religious syncretism (the intermixture of religions), in which mysteries, secret sacramental acts and consecrations, play an important part, and it was from these religions that Christianity as a higher religion arose. Thus we now find that sacramental conceptions were attached to the sacred acts of Christianity—to baptism and the Last Supper—the tribute which Christianity paid to the heathen world surrounding it. This process, it is true, was not evolved by Paul or furthered by him; it evolved its own accomplishment. Paul had no personal inclination towards what was sacramental. Two examples will illustrate the fact that this process had extended very far in the time of Paul. In Corinth there already existed in the time of Paul the custom of allowing the living to be baptized for the dead, so that the latter might be given the gift of grace. What a magical, mechanical view of baptism, which Paul, at any rate, did not condemn! But Paul comprehended the eating and drinking in the Communion as spiritual-material intercourse with the risen Lord, just as he believed

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that the heathens in their sacrificial feasts, the satanic counterpart of the Holy Eucharist, had a very real spiritual and bodily intercourse with the demons. Hence we have also the belief that the wrong use of the Communion involves dangerous material results, such as sickness or death.

Thus a multitude of new elements were introduced into the Gospel in the time of Paul, and partly through him: the worship of Christ; an intense and narrow belief in salvation, influenced by Platonic ideas; the dogma of sacrifice and compensation; the sacramental idea. Mention must also be made here of the doctrine of justification, which will be referred to again when the Reformation is dealt with. Paul certainly did not place this in the centre of his religion, and he probably only used it as a weapon of defence against the Judaism based on law. With Paul, however, begins the elaboration of Christianity.

A rapid glance will now be cast over the later stages of the development of Christianity, which must ever be of incalculable value to all evangelical Christians and supporters of the Reformation.

First of all we must look to the end of the second century after Christ. Here we are confronted by the powerful apparition

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of the Christian Church. In the time of Paul the idea of a Church existed, but to him the Church meant intense spirituality. Now the Church was established as a firmly planted, pliant, diversified organism. She had won her unity by means of a collection of holy writings, a common creed, universally recognised rules of faith. Tradition helped the Scriptures, and this tradition did not stand alone. At the head of the Church were the leaders, the bishops; and the bishops, regarded as one body, were honoured as the preservers of pure doctrine. Theologians obtained the leadership in the Church; theology came into existence. The Church possessed an organised and elaborate Divine worship, which, on the whole, was a worship of the Almighty in spirit and in truth; yet already it had once more assumed ceremonial, and more especially sacramental, elements. Indeed, there had again penetrated into the Church the distinction between the priests and the laity. It is in the highest degree noteworthy how this ecclesiastical form of Christianity repeated in many points the organic forms of the religions of the law.

When we consider the further development of this Church during the next century we shall see how, on the whole, the various

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elements introduced into the Gospel by Paul were further perfected.

1. The doctrine of the person of Christ. It would appear that the belief in the divinity of Christ had taken firm root almost from the beginning among the majority of believers belonging to the Pagan-Christian Church. They had no understanding of the subtler distinctions still observed in the Pauline theology. To the mass of men who had emerged from pagan polytheism it was quite an easy matter to believe in the divinity of Christ; but for the leaders, the learned men—and the theologians, in whom the essentially monotheistic idea of the Christian religion had arisen—this presented a great difficulty. For a long time an energetic attempt was made courageously to maintain the subordination of the Son to the Father. But finally the lay interest in religion was victorious, and this—we shall immediately see why—could only be satisfied with the dogma of absolute equality. In the Nicene Creed believers subscribed to the doctrine that God the Father and God the Son—and very soon the Holy Ghost was added—were like Beings—like Beings, yet not identical; three persons, yet one God. The later creeds—for example, the so-called Athanasian Creed—are full of

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these contradictions, of a kind appropriately described by a witty artist as "wooden iron." But we have not yet finished with these contradictions and difficulties. If Christ is God, what is the relation between the Divine nature and the human nature, between the Godhead of Christ and the fact of the Incarnation? The Council of Chalcedon, indeed, established this absolute contradiction: that two natures are in Christ—later it even asserted two wills—yet there is but one person, and these two natures exist in Him unmixed and unchanged, undivided and inseparable!

2. The idea of redemption and sacrifice. The idea of redemption in the form expressed by Paul—that is to say, belief in a supernatural Redeemer, absolutely different in nature from us—remained the central idea of the Christian Church. In the Eastern Church the question of the nature of the Redeemer, traces of which are to be found in Paul's teaching, comes to the front. The final object of the believer appears to have been the putting on of the Divine nature the highest object of salvation, immortality. The belief in redemption may perhaps be comprehended in the sentence, the Divine Christ must become man, so that we men may at some time become divine. It is clear,

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therefore, that in such a religion the belief in the divinity of Christ would occupy a central position. In the West, on the contrary, the idea of redemption became operative in definite relation to Christ's crucifixion and its moral, or, to speak more correctly, its juristic significance. Here the doctrine of the eternal service which Christ rendered mankind by His death, and of the eternal, atoning significance of His sacrifice, reaches its culmination.

3. The idea of the Sacrament. The sacramental idea tends more and more to overshadow piety in the Christian Church. A whole new world of ideas and dogmas was created. A mass of superstitions now entered into Christianity. From the third century onwards the Sacrament dominated the whole Christian worship of God. In the centre of this service was the holy Mass, the sacred partaking of the Communion, which was regarded as a repetition of Christ's sacrificial death. The priesthood experienced an enormous strengthening of its authority. In the Greek Church, especially, the belief in Sacraments, chiefly owing to the influence of the natural view of redemption, killed all spiritual piety.

4. A new and powerful problem now con-

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fronted the Church. The Church conquered the heathen world; it became a State Church. The early Church had been hostile to the world and to culture; the later Church showed itself friendly to the world, and desired to rule in the world. The hatred of the world was concentrated in the monasticism which now arose, which attracted to itself the best and noblest spirits of Christendom. In the East monasticism preserved its ascetic, quietistic character, but in the more vigorous West it developed into a civilising power of the highest importance. In the West, as in the East, the Church knew how to make use of this movement, which was at first almost revolutionary, and to appear as both rulers and ascetics.

Gradually the early Church split into divisions, into the Eastern Church and the Western Church, the separation already beginning when the Roman Empire was divided into an Eastern and a Western empire, and being completed in the Middle Ages.

In the Eastern Church—the Greek Catholic Church—Christianity on the whole sank to a lower stage of religious life. Its soul and its capacity to civilise vanished; dogma was consolidated; no progress was made; the believers still clung to dogmas which were ever becoming

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more and more truly incomprehensible. More than ever sacramental ideas dominated religion; religion sank to a system of outward, self-sufficing acts and ceremonies, to be scrupulously maintained. Added to this there was the reverence paid to saints and relics, and a decadent form of image-worship approaching to fetich-worship. The whole of the later pagan Greek world, with its mysterious character, awoke to new life. Religion became entirely custom, usage, as it had been when it was at the national stage of religious life; and from the time when the Byzantine Empire was subdued by advancing Islam the Oriental Church was split up into a number of insignificant, degenerate Churches closely united to the smaller Christian nations which were now arising in the East. Only in the Russian Church, which, as well as the Russian people, has experienced a great history, and is experiencing it now—one recalls to mind Tolstoy's description of Russian peasant life—does there appear to be signs of manifold energies and undreamt-of possibilities for expansion.

In contrast to the Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church did not lose its spiritual generating power. The Western Church from the beginning was less bound to the State. It had a history, and made history, and what a history

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it was!—the history of the Popes of the Middle Ages and the Crusades. Its theology, aroused by the philosophy of Islam, reached its zenith in the Middle Ages. The Roman Church not only developed the old traditional ecclesiastical elements (dogma, tradition, Christology, the idea of redemption and compensation), but quite new elements now gained power and influence.

1. Into the Roman Catholic Church the spirit of Roman law entered. While the Greek Catholic Church sank almost to the level of national paganism, in the Roman Church law and religion formed a close union, as was the case in the religions of the law. Religion becomes simply a legal contract between God and man. Baptism, for example, receives the significance of a sacrament (*sacramentum*). The word "sacrament" originally meant the oath of fealty which the Roman soldier had to take. Christianity became a system of obligations which must be absolutely carried out. Faults were to be atoned for by a second system of obligatory penances, somewhat analogous to the penance system of the Persian Church. The Church is the great penitential establishment that guards this system of atonements. The death of Christ is really regarded from the legal point of view of service rendered and atonement executed. The Church is the

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administrator of the inestimable treasures of Christ and His saints; ceremony, religious custom, stand in the forefront of religion.

2. In addition to the specific Roman legal spirit, there is the spirit of Roman world-empire. The position of the Church of Rome was from the beginning quite other than that of the great metropolis of the East. Rome was the only apostolic bishopric in the West; and whilst in the East the patriarchates rivalled one another, the Roman Church remained indisputably the first in the West. After the political power of the Western empire was destroyed, and the influence of Byzantium disappeared more and more, then Rome became the political power of the West. Rome stood like a rock amid the fierce surgings and storms of the wanderings of the nations. She took upon herself the mighty task of converting and civilising the barbaric peoples. Thus she drew to herself the spirit of world-domination. From the period of the rise of the mighty figures of the Frankish emperors, quite unconnected with the East and Constantinople, Rome reached the height of its political power in conjunction with the German Empire, now striving to gain ascendancy. Through the centuries Rome has striven for world-domination, and up to our own day the Church

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of Rome has never abandoned her political character.

And within the Roman Catholic Church itself Rome succeeded in its struggle for domination to the utmost limit. Even in our own day the idea of the Church has been definitely broadened. In the Middle Ages it stood firmly established, with its great Councils, so that the Councils (*i.e.*, the Christian bishops as a body) stood above the Pope, could decide questions of faith, and make and unmake Popes. Now, after centuries of struggle and friction between Councils and Popes, when the Papacy practically won the victory, Rome, by the Vatican Council of 1870, which established the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope in all matters of belief, has attained lasting, unrivalled domination in the Roman Church.

3. But it must not be forgotten that the Roman Church rejoiced in the possession of a great personality of almost prophetic power. It is only necessary to read the first chapter of St. Augustine's "Confessions" to recognise that here we are brought face to face with a personality of the highest rank. Wherever true vital religion has shone forth in the Roman Catholic Church we recognise the influence of St. Augustine. The piety of St. Augustine is, to a certain extent, a revival of Paul's piety.

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In just the same way everything is based on the opposition between sin and grace, between perdition and redemption, upon the absolute incapacity and bondage of the human will, and the all-sufficing Divine grace, resting on predestination. But the Divine grace—and here is the point where St. Augustine differed from St Paul—is indissolubly connected with the means of grace offered by the Catholic Church. Thus the influence of St. Augustine has led, not only to the intensifying and deepening of the religious life, but also to the development of ecclesiasticism and outward observances.

4. As the fourth characteristic of the Roman Church we must finally mention Western monasticism, which, as has already been said, possessed a moral and civilising significance of the highest importance quite different from that of the Greek Church. At the time when the Roman Papacy was at the height of its power monasticism likewise was at its zenith. By the side of the powerful figure of Innocent IV. stands the simple, humble one of St. Francis of Assisi, who, so far as his influence on the life of the Middle Ages is concerned, may, in a certain sense, be placed by St. Augustine. The influence of his personality in literature extended to the time of Dante, in pictorial art beyond Giotto, the delineator of St. Francis's

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life, and Fra Angelico to Fra Bartolomeo and Raphael.

Up till now we have traced the history of the elaboration of Christianity. For fifteen hundred years the Gospel has unfolded itself before our eyes in ever-varied, manifold and diversified forms. Now we approach the era of release and simplification.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY

IN answering the question concerning the future of Christianity it will be best, first of all, to fix our attention upon the final, definitive form and development which Christianity has assumed. The Reformation was a mighty act of freedom for Christianity accomplished by the German spirit, a return to simplicity and truth.

First of all the Reformation signifies the destruction of the whole outward fabric of the Roman Church, to which more than a thousand years had contributed, the abolition of the political and State character of the Church, the breaking down of all outward authorities on which people had formerly relied. Before the upright spirit of the Wittenberg monk burdens, heavy as mountains, faded away. The Church could no longer be the final authority in matters of doctrine; the Pope himself, the Councils, the delegates of the whole Church, could all make

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mistakes. Luther, in alliance with the newly awakened knowledge of the Universities, and the scientific consciousness, appealed from all authority, all tradition of the last fifteen hundred years, to the Holy Scriptures. But he did not even stop here, for the Scriptures were not authoritative to him in every single word. He made important distinctions, he gave currency to the great principle, which was not, however, further developed by him, that the Bible is authoritative as long as it is in harmony with Christ. If, indeed, he often departed from this bold standpoint, yet—although in harmony with modern biblical criticism which regards the Bible as the historic source of the revelation which culminated in Christ—he gave the Bible its right to be in the Evangelical Church.

The Reformation further signifies the freeing of evangelical piety and morality from a mass of external observances which had accumulated in the course of history. With the casting off of indulgences a process began which was never to cease. The substance and central idea of the Catholic worship of God, the sacrificial Mass, the privileges of the priesthood, the whole system of penances and atonements, the (Papal) dues, pilgrimages, the worship of the saints and the Virgin, and many other things were now destroyed. It was an enormous release.

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Luther, relying on St. Paul and his attacks on the Jewish justification by the law, set his doctrine of faith alone against that of works preached by the Catholic Church. Thus the essential nature of the Lutheran Reformation may be conveniently summed up by stating that Luther placed the doctrine of justification by faith in the forefront of the Christian religion. As a matter of fact he did much more than this; he once more revealed religion as religion, he freed it from all its Romish deformities. With authority he announced the ancient truth that religion consists in the surrender of the heart to the merciful God, who is ever gracious towards us and our acts, and in the directing of our conscience towards Him; religion was an act of the whole, living personality, and not just the performance of good deeds.

Luther, when he destroyed these externals, also destroyed the Sacrament in its peculiar significance, and with it sacramental religion. He cast on one side all the accretions of the Catholic sacramental religion which went beyond the teaching of the Bible. But he did more than this. Perpetually, and to the very end of his life, he emphasised the fact that everything depended on the Word, that it was the Word alone that was efficient in the

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Sacrament itself, and that the Sacrament was only a special form of the Word, and thus he maintained in the most decisive manner the spiritual religion of the Gospel as opposed to all physical conceptions, and here he reversed a tendency which had begun in the time of the New Testament. It is no argument against this estimate of the Reformation, however, that Luther, in his struggle with the fanatics—the Anabaptists and the followers of Zwingli—re-admitted, both to his own mind and to his Church, the Catholic view of the Sacrament; for by his fundamental attitude towards the sacrament he secured for the Evangelical Church, for ever, the purely spiritual (or symbolical) view of the sacred acts of Christianity (baptism and the Communion).

The last and the most important thing, perhaps, that Luther's Reformation effected was the complete change in the attitude of Christianity towards the secular world, with its moral duties and its work. He thus entirely destroyed the twofold character of the Catholic Church, that peculiar and inconsistent attitude towards the world, that clever combination in pursuance of which the Catholic Church was at once lords of the world and fugitives from the world. He cast aside the last remnant of the ascetic character of Christianity—at any rate in

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principle. There was only one way of serving God—by living a moral, good life. The man-servant and the maid-servant who served their master, the mother who looked after her child, the father who maintained his household, the prince who ruled over his land, performed God's work as well as, if not better than, the priest and the monk. The Gospel teaches a secular morality, the common daily life becomes sacred. This is a great and mighty progress; indeed, one may say that the Reformation developed seeds and thoughts which are scarcely recognisable in the original Gospel, and which were, until then, completely dormant and hidden.

This is the last, definitive stage of development which the Gospel passed through. The Reformation, naturally, had its limitations and drawbacks. Luther, and especially the Churches which arose after him—the Evangelical Churches in particular—took over from the Church of the Middle Ages, without due consideration, many ideas which are no longer considered to be of permanent value. I will briefly name these: the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, which has gained an all-powerful influence in the Evangelical Churches, which are based on the Bible alone; the whole of the Christological dogma with all its metaphysical speculations, such as the doctrine of the Trinity and

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the doctrine of vicarious suffering in the form in which it was embodied in the Middle Ages; St. Augustine's principle, which was entirely animated by the contradiction between sin and grace.

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This question of what the Reformation has bequeathed to us in the matter of problems, of work for the purer development of the Gospel, is connected with our inquiry concerning the future of Christianity. We must now investigate this matter somewhat more closely.

First of all it must be said that the question of the future of Christianity is the question of the future of religion. For what we have learned in the course of our wanderings through the history of religion is precisely this fact, that the Christian religion is absolutely superior to all the other religions, and that Christianity represents the highest point which religious development has reached.

And, indeed, not only in Christianity is the highest point reached, but in it all former lines of religious thought appear to converge. First of all let us observe the external position which Christianity holds in history. It stands quite by itself, arising a good five hundred years after the great age of the prophetic revival of

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religion. Of all these prophetic religions, only the Jewish religion reached a higher stage in the form of Christianity. Islamism, which arose some five hundred years later, was a distinctly retrograde step.

Let us now consider the real, inward superiority of Christianity.

1. In Christianity every specific national element in religion was finally overthrown, and yet Christianity, in a far higher degree than Islamism and Buddhism, was able, in the long course of its history, to penetrate into the innermost being of the most different nations, so that we now speak of a Roman and a German, a Slavonic and an Armenian, an English and a North American Christianity.

2. In the Christian religion, religion as simple, spiritual belief in the living God is revealed in its purest form, and most free from all outward things (forms of worship, ceremonies). The Gospel is in its very nature absolutely a thing of the spirit, and in the course of its history Christianity, in spite of backslidings, has always been able to return to this inner light and spirituality. And it is just because the Gospel is purely spiritual that it has been able to reveal itself in the most varied outward forms and wrappings. Compared with Christianity, how overburdened with outward ceremonies, for

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example, Islamism is (we think of its five fundamental principles), or the Hindoo religion, with its strict prohibition against omitting the smallest detail of the religious life!

3. Christianity, in freeing religion from nationality and ceremonial, accomplished the deliverance of the individual in religion, and supported the principle of individualism in its clearest and strongest form. It did not, however, isolate the individual, but strenuously directed his footsteps into the paths of human society.

4. Christianity is eminently a moral religion. It shares with the religions of the law this voluntary character, and in common with these it has as its central belief the idea of justice animating the will; but in the purity and energy of its morality Christianity is far in advance of these religions. Purified religion here stands in close conjunction with purified morality.

5. Christianity is eminently a religion of redemption. It points to a higher life, and says that this earthly life is not the highest. But it by no manner of means despises this life. It unfolds the higher element that exists in it, and finds this pre-eminently in the moral rather than the intellectual nature. Thus Christianity is the religion of moral redemption, and its

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highest good is the forgiveness of sin and guilt, and the freeing of the will towards the good.

6. As Christianity is a religion of moral redemption it entertains no hostile disposition, but rather shows itself helpful, towards the life of mankind and its work of civilisation. Even in the time when Christianity found in monasticism the central point of its existence it was a branch of this same monasticism that became a civilising force of the highest importance. (We may compare with this the Buddhist monasticism.) It is no mere chance that has made the Christian nations the leaders of civilisation. But again, the Christian religion never spent itself in the work of the world and its development (as, for example, the Persian religion did). It regarded all this work as a means to an end; it proclaimed to the individual that he should consciously aspire to carry out God's commands under His all-seeing eyes, to dwell in peace with God, and to live under the shadow of eternity.

Thus once more it must be said that the question of the future of Christianity is the question of the future of religion. We will not here touch upon the question of whether within a measurable distance of time Christianity, which now includes perhaps a third of

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humanity, will be the only religion to be considered.

But—if there is to be only one religion—it is Christianity which must be the religion of the progressive nations of the earth. From this point of view no other religion can be compared with it. History speaks plainly here. Every attempt to graft the Buddhist religion on European culture has been unsuccessful. When Schopenhauer, half a century ago, found in this Oriental religion the last word of wisdom, and honoured Buddha as his patron saint, the explanation of this disposition of mind is to be found in the misery and stagnation of the system of petty German States under which Schopenhauer grew up. In an age which still lives under the shadow of the mighty Bismarck, an age of national revival, of the social question, of the great success of the Nietzsche-Zarathustra teaching, the followers of the great philosopher can only be regarded as very curious saints. The European Buddhists may fix their headquarters in the metropolis of France, which is ready to receive anything strange and morbid; here and there they may gain some following in Germany, but all these efforts will pass powerless away.

In still another sense the question of the future of Christianity is the question of the

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future of religion. This proposition concerns those who are of opinion that they can have and preserve religion while denying the religion —that is, Christianity—which is based on history. Christianity is the only living religion that concerns us. This is a fact of enormous importance. When we follow carefully the course of history we see that the development of religion proceeds at longer and longer intervals, at intervals of centuries, at intervals of a thousand years. The higher the religious life of man ascends the more firmly fixed are his beliefs. New forms of belief become more and more rare. They are always in the nature of a creative miracle, they arise amid a great convulsion of human life. There is a rending of the elements, an upheaval of the earth; and yet there are men to-day who believe that a new religion can be made in a moment. They declare hastily that Christianity is worn out, cast it on one side, patch together a few variegated shreds of belief and call that modern religion! Things are not arranged quite so simply. He who proclaims in this round fashion that Christianity is a failure proclaims at the same time that he is without religious feeling.

And on this account the future of Christianity is so highly important. Now, the question of its

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future is the question of its capacity for further development. People may here object and say, But is a development required? Does not the old faith suffice? Our answer is that this development is required because since the Reformation the whole structure of human life has entirely altered, and history and experience teach us that when this happens religion assumes other forms.

In order to answer the question, therefore, whether, and in what direction, the development of Christianity is necessary, we must consider first the change in human society since the Reformation. What strikes us here as the most distinctive and important fact is, briefly, the rise and development of a culture independent of all ecclesiastical and religious influence. The early Church was hostile to culture, while the culture of the Middle Ages was entirely dependent on the Church. The Renaissance marks the earliest transitory rise of a magnificent culture independent of the Church. But this culture, so far as its outward duration was concerned, was but ephemeral. The influence and the interest of the Church were not at this time destroyed, but simply cast on one side, a neglect which later was to be rued bitterly. It was only in the Protestant countries — Holland and England

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took the lead here—that modern culture was developed. First of all, on the material side, we see the rise of modern astronomy and natural science (Newton), and modern technical knowledge (machinery, world-wide industry). Corresponding to this effort to control the powers of Nature there is the endeavour to investigate and control the laws of human society, and now the modern sciences, politics, political economy, and statistics arise. Thus there came into existence a thoroughly rational system of ethics, free from religious influence, based on the idea of human society, a whole conception which may perhaps be comprehended under the name of Deism. This culture is not revolutionary; it is not even directly hostile to the Church; it is simply secular. Enormously self-conscious, with an intense and constant joy in the material, concrete side of life, full of varied interests, with both feet planted firmly on the earth, culture cries out to us, "Behold, I am here!"—The Dutch and Flemish artists, Shakespeare above all others, may be taken as symbols of eternal significance.

The consequence of this was an enormous setback to all religious life. It must always be accounted to the honour of German enlightenment, German rationalism, that it has ever strenuously maintained the close connection

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between the Christian religion and modern culture. German idealism in poetry and philosophy has always enriched and strengthened the culture of rationalism, especially on its religious side. But yet, on the other hand, especially in its general attitude, it has continued its works on the basis of "rationalism," on the basis of the self-evident proposition that there is an independent culture resting on mankind which is valuable in itself and which certainly needs no confirmation from the Church. In this the nineteenth century has introduced no new idea. If we study carefully the intellectual life of Germany, we see that in the eighteenth century all energies were concentrated at one point and proceeded to develop from that point. On the one hand, in the domain of religious life there is during the whole of the century a strong movement towards narrowness and ecclesiastical consolidation, and proportionately a loss of religious influence on the community. On the other hand, the eighteenth century marks the beginning for Germany of the advancing powers of technical science, enormous trade, and international intercourse, together with the dominating world-wide influence of Anglo-French positivism and materialism, so that the Germans fall far below the unity and completeness of idealistic culture. Yet, in spite

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of all these currents and counter-currents one important new fact has remained—the existence of a modern European and North American civilisation, strong in itself and resting on itself alone.

As a symbol of this modern ideal of life the picture of Goethe comes to mind. His personality impresses us as that of a life animated by the spirit within, and acting in accordance with universal self-evolved laws of development. Absorbing all the currents and ideas of his time, working with enormous industry and knowledge, wrestling victoriously with all the spirits of evil, and courageously trampling them under foot, Goethe rose triumphantly to a harmonious conception of the world and attitude towards life, and sat enthroned on the heights, like Zeus on Olympus, generously dispensing his gifts. We have here before our sight not merely an externally magnificent culture such as the Anglo-French rationalism presents us with, but a culture of the deepest spiritual kind, in which all the nobler spiritual powers of human life, religion also, find a place—a rich world, complete in itself, firmly planted on itself.

And close to Goethe stands Bismarck; again we have the picture of a life in accordance with universal laws—the picture of heroic, energetic, infinitely capable manhood. Stand-

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ing firmly on the earth in which his roots are cast, dealing only with what is, Bismarck, in a hard struggle for existence, raised his humiliated nation to an undreamt-of position of power and authority. As if possessed of a magic wand, he awakened the idealistic German dreamer. And on all sides there re-echoed—in Germany as well—the cry of the duty of self-preservation and self-assertion, of the struggle for world-domination; on all sides a new desire to live, new aspirations, new organisations, the struggle for existence, class conflicts.

Is it possible that Christianity will be able to regain in this world of modern culture the influence which it so notoriously lost during the evolution of the last centuries? Christianity, in its essential idea, dominant up to the present, is based on a fundamental conception utterly opposed to the ideal of life which has just been described. The narrow Pauline idea of redemption, which was developed by St. Augustine and strengthened anew by Luther, still dominates it. Do not let my readers misunderstand me on this point. I know, of course, that the great men in the history of Christianity in the vast wealth of their personality possessed many other valuable conceptions of religions as well as this fundamental one. But we are not concerned with

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that here, but with the question of what part of their religion really survived in history, and how far it influenced the world. The fundamental part which has survived may be briefly stated: The race of man from Adam onwards is utterly corrupt; incapable of doing anything good by itself, it sinks more and more deeply into the slough of sin and corruption. At the most it may attain to a certain external "middle-class" righteousness of little value, a purely external culture. And into this lost world a Redeemer descends to redeem us; He is quite different from us, He is from the heaven above, we from the earth below; He is filled with the Divine nature, we are only men. All is here based on the opposition between sin and grace, and in the centre of religion is placed the consciousness of sin, and the consolation of freedom from sin and guilt.

Are we to maintain the validity of this conception in our modern civilisation? We will give the highest reverence to those believers of old who upheld it with such absolute devotion. But we must consider what the consequences to-day are of such a belief. If we accept in its entirety this conception, if, that is, we take from modern life its very essence, and force it to self-renunciation, we shall have absolutely to cast on one side such complete and great figures as those of

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Goethe and Bismarck. Such a conception of Christianity was comprehensible when Christianity found itself opposed to a heathen civilisation against which it struggled. It remained comprehensible in the Middle Ages when the Church judged in this manner a civilisation which she herself had created. But such a conception cannot any longer be accepted in modern life, with its absolutely independent attitude.

Had we not better, therefore, state the problem in another form? Let us ask ourselves if that Pauline-Lutheran conception of Christianity is the only possible one? Cannot the Gospel be revealed in other forms? Let us place before our mind the figure of Jesus. In Him or His preaching there is little of that harsh contradiction, that exaggerated attitude. He never conceived it to be the object of His preaching to call forth from His hearers, at any price, the confession of their radically corrupt nature. He aroused moral energy. "This do and thou shalt live." "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." When He preached to His contemporaries repentance, He meant chiefly the regeneration of the will. His ideal was immeasurably lofty. He said that no one was good except God. His gospel was a gospel of redemption, of the forgiveness of sins, but

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these represented only one part of His teaching; the other was the furtherance of moral perfection. He gladly went among sinners and publicans, but He never said that all men were publicans and sinners; He told the parable of the prodigal son, but He did not mean that all men were prodigal or were to become such. He was acquainted with those whom He called blessed, who were not far from the kingdom of heaven. The forgiveness of sins was of no value without the regeneration of the will; it could only console those who tried, however feebly, to fulfil the will of the Heavenly Father.

Thus the conviction is borne in upon us that we are acting in conformity to God's will when, in proclaiming the Gospel, we do not assert that man is hopelessly corrupt in his thoughts and in his acts. But it is important to proclaim to the men and women of to-day that the highest and finest ideal, the perfection of life, is offered to them in the Gospel, and that all their strivings and all their work will pass aimlessly away if their final object is not life with God, and acts in accordance with His will as the Gospel requires. And to reach to this ideal we must be roused to a consciousness of our imperfection, of our constant backslidings; we must be kindled to a longing for redemption; "where

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there is forgiveness of sins there is life and blessedness."

And just as the Gospel idea of redemption assumes for us a somewhat different form, so our thoughts of a Redeemer have changed in a particular direction. We no longer hold the belief that Jesus was absolutely different from ourselves—He heaven-born, we earth-born. Rather, we say that His figure is the noblest and the most perfect that has been granted to humanity on its long journey from the lower stage to the higher. He is the goal of our existence, the leader of our life, to whom no other leader is comparable.

And hence we no longer speak of the "divinity" of Christ. For many pious Christians, indeed, this formula of the Godhead of Christ has become the symbol of an acknowledgment of the Christian belief, and hesitation on this point means to them hesitation concerning the principles of belief. The German Emperor's confession of belief in the old faith finds in these days an echo in very many hearts. And yet, even though we must arouse pain and anger among those who hold to the old belief, we cannot but oppose this view. We will state the grounds of our opposition. Adolph Harnack rightly objected to the public statement of the Emperor on the ground that the

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correct dogmatic expression of the old Christological idea was not belief in the divinity of Christ, but in His Divine humanity. Further, he objected that the expression "Divine humanity" was no biblical term, just as the Bible writers scarcely ever called Christ God, or spoke of the divinity of Christ. But the evidence of Jesus Himself is still more convincing. Throughout His life He placed Himself with men and not with God; to the young man who called Him good He spoke the decisive word which makes the dogma of Christ's divinity almost impossible: "None is good save one, even God." He desired to be so little different from us men that He rejected the claim of absolute goodness. In all His parables, in the most genuine one that has been preserved for us, He places the souls of men directly in the presence of the Heavenly Father. We are taking from Jesus no honour to which He Himself would have laid claim when we cannot acknowledge the divinity of Christ. Our faith does not depend on a belief in the supernatural, non-human nature of the God of redemption, but on the earthly life of our Lord, on His own faith, which He sealed with His death, on His manner of living, on the love which He bore to sinners. We honour in this earthly being the Captain who guides every one to God, the Guide

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for the simple as well as for the highly-cultured; indeed, we see in the belief in His personality the presence of God, and so we gladly confess that God was in Christ.

Thus we escape all further speculation concerning the Divine nature in Christ, the relation between God the Father and God the Son, the relation of the two natures, the unity of the three Persons. In the centre of our faith there is no longer an absolutely contradictory statement. We say with confidence that we may cheerfully leave all these matters alone if we simply want to get at the essence and true nature of Christianity.

The idea of redemption has been concentrated in the course of the history of Christianity in the belief in the special significance of Christ's sacrificial death. Christ's death was the great sacrifice offered for our sins; it obtained a vicarious value and meaning. Important considerations affect us in this matter. We do not here mainly rely on theoretical objections, but on the weight of our moral consciousness, which now acts independently. For this is the very hall-mark of our modern life; our moral feeling has become so independent that it will not admit any strange moral idea on the authority of religion. Our moral sense, based on Kant's Ethics, speaks as follows with all clearness:

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"The sin which you have committed no one can atone for instead of you, neither man nor God. It cannot be transferred, like a concrete object. It is a fact that guilt can never be atoned for by punishment borne by you or another, and still less can the consciousness of guilt be removed by another. Sin and guilt can only be removed by the voluntary moral and personal act of our God, who forgives sin and remits guilt." Our religious perception tells us that we take an unworthy view of God when we say He cannot forgive of His own free will.

And once again our own experience bids us appeal to Jesus Himself. In His preaching we find no trace of the dogma of atonement, whilst His saying with regard to the ransom for the many, as well as the institution of the Last Supper, are very far removed from the dogmatic view of His death, and imply no more than the idea of martyrdom (see p. 236). Jesus speaks in His preaching of the Divine fatherly love which pardons, without laying down any conditions or any reference to His death. The father in the parable forgives the prodigal son unconditionally; there is no question of a "but" or an "if." An attempt has been made to read into this parable the doctrine of vicarious suffering, but this cannot be done without altering the parable entirely.

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So far, we have endeavoured to make it clear that the central idea of the Christian religion, the idea of redemption, must assume, owing to the great change in the structure of human society, a slightly different form. In regard to another matter, a similar change in what was hitherto regarded as a fundamental belief is also required. Corresponding to modern culture there is a special mode of thinking which is essentially peculiar to it. The main characteristic of this modern mode of thinking rests upon the determination to try to explain everything that takes place in the world by natural causes; or—to express it in another form—it rests upon the determined assertion of universal laws to which all phenomena, natural and spiritual, are subject.

As a foundation for modern thought there stands on the one hand the law of Nature. Our external civilisation, with its natural science and its technical science, rests on the recognition and acceptance of an inviolable order of Nature in accordance with the laws of Nature. And science, penetrating deep into the spiritual life of mankind—our thoughts turn here to psycho-physiology, to the science of political economy and statistics, to the emphasis laid on "environment," to the coherence in natural science itself due to the

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action of natural law—recognises and asserts an order in Nature, calculable, regulated, and in accordance with law. It asserts even more than that, for the belief in the law of Nature has become a fundamental belief of our life. We may, in theory, persuade ourselves that the order of Nature is only apparent, and that every moment a breach of that law of Nature is possible, but we do not act in accordance with that belief. We arrange our life on the basis of that law. We make our calculations generations beforehand; generations of astronomers work together at an astronomical problem. We make laws which can only be developed to their full significance by our successors. We live with the full conviction that we stand on the basis of secure, reliable reality.

There is still one thing that no longer fits in with this new world of thought—a miracle, in the strict sense of the word, in the sense of the intervention of God in this natural order of things by setting aside its laws. But, on the other hand, the miraculous appears deeply interwoven with the Christian religion. In all ages of Christianity belief in miracles has been strong—in the age of the New Testament, of the early Church, the Middle Ages, the age of Luther. The longing for the miraculous is strikingly shown in Björnson's book "Concerning Energy."

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And yet we moderns can no longer hold fast to this belief in miracles. Here again it is not merely that it contradicts our whole mode of thought, but it is in direct contradiction to our changed belief in God. We have learnt to believe in a God who is a God of order, and not of chaos, in a God who has woven the weft of this world so skilfully and securely that it never needs correction, in a God who in the great orderly march onwards through the apparently pitiless struggle for existence is leading the generations of living beings to a higher stage. A God who must perpetually help on His works by miracles, who has to pick up again the stitches in his web which have been dropped, seems to us insignificant and useless.

And when we once more investigate the history of our belief from this point of view we see things differently from what they appeared at the first glance. We perceive that in maintaining this attitude towards the miraculous we are only following the development which is in accordance with history. For the Evangelical Church has already abandoned a large part of its belief in miracles. Only the early Church and the Middle Ages had a strong belief in miracles, and in those days man lived in an atmosphere of the miraculous which was an accompaniment of the daily life. In

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the Evangelical Churches—especially in their struggles with the Catholic worship of saints—the conviction gained ground that, on the whole, miracles no longer happen, and the great miracles belonged to the past. Belief in the miracles of the Gospel and of the Old Testament was alone demanded. But this belief in miracles is based on the idea that the miracles which have come down to us are not really miracles at all, and that no personal act of belief can be based on them. Miracles are no longer the bulwark of faith: it is faith that must support miracles. Thus in our denial of the miraculous we are only completing what the Evangelical Church of the past had done in part. And here we may go a step farther back, to the life of Christ. It is quite true that Jesus and His disciples thought differently from ourselves on the subject of miracles. Their knowledge did not allow them to see clearly the boundaries of the possible. Yet, in spite of this, Jesus never saw in miracles the most important part of faith. He performed miracles, but others did that likewise. When the multitude asked for a sure sign from Him, so that they might be able to believe in Him, He absolutely rejected the demand: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if

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one arise from the dead." The peculiar and extraordinary miracles of Jesus may be easily separated from His life. His daily acts of healing and help do not belong here; for they are not miracles in the strict sense of the word, and even if we reason them away the perfect and harmonious portrait of Jesus remains.

Thus, led by the hand of Jesus and His Spirit, we venture, even with regard to the history of the Gospel, to free Christianity from a belief in miracles in the restricted sense—that is to say, so far as this belief requires us to deny belief in the inviolable course of Nature, acting in accordance with law. The miraculous in the deeper sense of the word, the miracle of the individual spiritual life, still exists for us. What disappears is only the belief in miracles which affect the order of Nature.

The modern conception of the world postulates, however, not merely the universal validity of the laws of Nature, but also certain inviolable principles and axioms in the development of the intellectual life. As characteristic of modern times, and especially of the nineteenth century, the flourishing science of history must take its place by the side of natural science. By the side of the law of Nature stands the idea of historical evolution. With the

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help of this idea of evolution, historical science puts before itself the object of explaining all intellectual events by reference to a universal law. And if she thereby lays no claim to solving the fundamental riddle of the isolated personalities and individualities which make history, yet she is very far from accepting the intervention of the supernatural in the otherwise natural course of events, or from believing that there is any opposition between the natural course of events and that which is directed by Divine revelation.

Now, the modern science of history has subjected the history of religion, like all other things which affect human life, to its investigations. After a scientific method had been formulated, attention was directed to the history of the Old and the New Testaments. With unceasing energy historical investigations were made into the minutest details. We may strive against this method or act in accordance with it; in any case the process goes on. For even those who uphold the older view of history must work with the tools of history. The halo of the supernatural which had clung around "sacred history" was destroyed, and everywhere a course of events was discerned, which was, on the whole, explicable, in so far as such events, which ever present the riddle

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of personality and individuality, can be explained. Everywhere we see development on an ascending scale, and everywhere the partial dependence of the spiritual on the natural; we see how religion shapes itself in accordance with the universal evolution of civilisation, and how close is the connection of religions with the surrounding world. All is in a state of fusion, all is interdependent. When all history has thus been brought to a level it is impossible to believe in a Divine revelation, in the old acceptance of the term, which restricted revelation to one special province.

And yet the Christian religion does rest on the thought of revelation. In the light of this all seems capable of explanation. Luther destroyed ecclesiastical authority, but he fell back upon the Bible, and his Church is based upon the dogma of verbal inspiration. The dogma has been abandoned, but people still considered they had a right to believe in the Bible as containing a special Divine revelation. We are scarcely conscious of how far the old barriers have been swept away; walls and barriers are erected which last but a short time. History would appear to destroy the idea of inspiration—that is to say, of any special revelation—in the Old and New Testament. The theological attempt, made known to a large

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circle of persons through the German Emperor's open letter, to enforce the acceptance of a double revelation is, in the form proposed, not tenable; history does not acknowledge it.

And what if history were right? Suppose this view were the true one? In that case only a bold step forward will save us. If the science of history demands that the seals be broken and the special revelation be surrendered, then we must seriously consider the idea of a universal revelation. On the one hand we may say with confidence that history nowhere shows us one place where a special Divine revelation took place, where a Divine act occurred side by side with the human act, yet to be separated from it. Everything in history stands forth as human. On the other hand, we may say: All is of Divine working; the whole history of mankind, with its gradual creation and attainment of a standard of moral values based on no external authority, is the work of God, who ever draws mankind toward Him. And the central idea of this great spiritual course of events is the development of the religious life, and the central point of the history of the Old and New Testaments, the object and crown of the whole development, is the Gospel and the person of Jesus. This is a liberal and pious conception

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of history which is justified by fact and is quite capable of holding its own against the old conception (apart from the question of a special "sacred history" the result of the supernatural and almighty power of God).

If we continue this line of thought farther, we are confronted by a new question: Does not this historical investigation which shakes the foundation of all things force us to acknowledge that the Christian religion is only a passing form of religion, capable of being surpassed, which must necessarily lead to a higher religion? I do not think so. Naturally history can pronounce here no absolute judgment; it cannot assert or prove that in Christianity the height of religious development has been reached. History would be going beyond its proper limits if it did this. But at the same time history cannot assert the impossibility of such a supposition, or it would be also going beyond its capacity. History shows us, indeed, in all branches of human life a gradual rise in the standard of values. But it does not prove to us that this process is interminable; rather, it tends to show that in many departments the heights already reached cannot be overstepped. Thus faith possesses an open field, and no scientific certainty is here required. But if we do wish

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to rise to the belief that religion in the shape of the simple, plain Gospel cannot be surpassed, it is above all necessary for us to be firmly convinced that for us and our age the Gospel the only and the all-sufficing form of religion that we require. And now we will return to our original question.

We have seen how a great development of the Christian religion seems to be required on all sides. The conception of redemption, the dogma of the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the idea of vicarious sacrifice, the belief in the miraculous, in the old view of revelation—we see how all these are swept away in the stream of development. What still remains? Those who are full of dread and anxiety might think only a heap of ruins. But to our joyful astonishment we have seen when we criticised several things that what remained was the simple Gospel of Jesus. Even when we differ here and there from Luther and from Paul, we cling all the more firmly to the person and the Gospel of Jesus.

It is true we cannot simply take the Gospel of Jesus just as it stands. The Gospel has in it things of eternal value, and likewise things of merely transitory value. To the latter class belongs much of the eschatology of the Gospel

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—the expectation of the immediate end of the world, and, indeed, the whole conception of the world on which these ideas rest—the idea of an earth placed in the middle of the world, of a vaulted heaven above it, of a God who, dwelling amid the clouds, surrounded by His angels, comes to judge, the belief in angels who ascend and descend from heaven to earth, the belief in devils and demons, in miracles and in inspiration, and in many other things. But these are only the outward husks through which the pure, inward, true light of the Gospel—only hidden for the moment—shines forth in glory everywhere.

But even the true inward contents of the Gospel must not be slavishly copied by us. They must be translated, not merely into our speech, but into our common spiritual experiences. And in doing this we do not want arbitrarily to destroy the threads of historical development and to go back with exaggerated purism to the beginnings of the Gospel. No, wherever historical evolution lends anything of value to the Gospel—I am thinking here of the attitude of the Reformation towards secular work and many other things—we must accept it and carry it farther. Pure, true religion has never existed without an

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external covering woven of the fabric of the age.

We hold fast with all our power to the faith of the Gospel in a personal, heavenly Father—a faith which conquers the world and rises high above this world, yet takes us into the world and the world's work. We carry this idea of faith into our modern knowledge, into our representation of God. Truly God stands to us no longer as the kindly Father, above the starry canopy, whose garment, the firmament, is interwoven with the glory of the stars, who sends His angels to guard the pious, who with His miraculous powers, which are visible to the bodily eye, influences this our world, whose laws He casts on one side. God is to us the Eternal, the All-Powerful One, who is potent in the vast starry world and in the eternities of time and space, before which thought grows dizzy—potent alike in the eternally insignificant things and in the eternally great things. He is the God whose garment is the iron law of Nature, which hides Him from human eyes in a thick husk which cannot be torn off; who, in accordance with the terrible law of the struggle for existence, leads His creatures upwards into a world of moral, individual freedom; who surrounds us with His existence as with a dizzy abyss.

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And clinging to the hand of Jesus we venture to plunge into the abyss. We lift our hands in prayer and say, "Our Father in Heaven." It is indeed no small task which we have to perform. Faith ever means struggle, work, new efforts, further progress.

And we take our stand by Jesus on the ground of the absolutely simple conviction that God is to be found in the good, and that faith in the Heavenly Father includes moral deeds and moral work in the human community. We deduce the categorical imperative laid upon a life of good deeds from the Gospel, from the belief in a fatherly God who desires that His sons shall be perfect even as He is perfect, under the shadow of whose eye we feel we live, before whose judgment we shall have to give an account of our life.

But here again we must not simply copy; we cannot bring to our modern life the ascetic mode of dealing with moral affairs which the earliest Christians adopted. We plunge with courage into the stream of the evolution of the Gospel, into the secular conception of ethics as established by the Reformation. We know that to do well, in God's sense of the term, does not require external works, but the simple fulfilment of our earthly duties. And into a world which has grown great and wide, which

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does not believe that it stands at the end, but at the beginning of a new period; into a world full of obstinate questions and problems; into an age of modern technical science, of world intercourse and world industry, an age of the social question, of the rivalry of the nations and of class war, we bring the teaching set forth by the Gospel—the life spent for the good of others, the nobility of love that serves, the noble, holy comprehension of all human life, the absolute, God-given moral tranquillity in the face of all hostility.

We feel deeply the imperfection of all our deeds, the eternal contradiction between what we do and what we ought to do; we feel how we ever fall below what God demands of us. And the more absolutely we are conscious of these demands and the more earnestly we regard them, the more strongly that feeling of imperfection grows within us. It is just the modern man who has for the first time learnt to penetrate the greatness and power of his God who will be particularly accessible to that part of the Gospel which deals with redemption. He will from the very first be disposed to feel that, in the presence of God, he is of absolute insignificance and worthlessness, and he will, above all, feel his moral worthlessness. We cling to Jesus's Gospel of a

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God who forgives sins. We know that in the life of each one of us there are hours when nothing keeps us upright except the belief in a forgiving Father, such as Jesus revealed to us in the parable of the prodigal son. But we also believe we are in accordance with the will of Jesus when no compulsion comes into the question of belief. We will not make the thought of sin and guilt a principle of our life which destroys everything else; we recognise, indeed, times in our life when through the goodness of God we have made progress and have gladly done His will, and so we feel joyful and free and thankful. But yet we shall always accept the saying of Jesus: "When you have done all, say, We are yet unworthy servants."

And thus we are still possessed of a bold and joyous hope. This eternal hope is not the basis of our Christianity, but its highest expression and object. We hope for a higher life nearer to God, for a solution to all our anxious questions and doubts, to our manifold fears and anxieties, for freedom from the fetters of the commonplace and of sin. This hope must be free from all egoism. We are not only concerned about our own poor life; we feel that our life is bound to a great society, a kingdom of spirits, whose ruler is Christ; we

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feel we are linked to the great souls of the past who work with us, and that we are in close connection with all who work with us in the present. We cannot believe that all is merely a passing show, foam which the waves of the ocean will disperse. We have and we hold a living personal hope:

"But heard are the voices,
Heard are the sages,
The Worlds and the Ages.
Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless;
Here eyes do regard you,
In Eternity's stillness.
Here is all fulness!
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work and despair not."

And all this: God the Father, life in accordance with His will spent in joyful work for the service of the world, forgiveness of sins and eternal hope—all this hangs together and is crystallised in perfect clearness in the person of our Lord Jesus. And we speak thus to Him: "Thou art our Leader! There have been many leaders of men in different departments of life. Be Thou our Leader, with whom no other is comparable, the Leader to the highest, the Guide of our souls to God, the Way, the Truth and the Life."

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We modern men, with our leanings towards individualism and our great independence of mind, need to take to heart a warning against standing alone. We must place both our feet firmly in the community which owes its origin to Jesus. It is a mistake to think that we can have and preserve all that we have been speaking about in isolation. For a time the individual may perhaps preserve it, but later the soul slips away from merely inherited ideas. It is only in the community—history speaks clearly on this point—that man develops the wings and the capacity to soar into an invisible world; only in the community is strength developed to carry the moral demands of the Gospel into an unfriendly world. But we only find this community by joining an ecclesiastical organisation based on an historical foundation. Undismayed by the rubbish of old tradition which is difficult to cast aside, by the many strange, old-fashioned forms, by the barriers and hedges and walls of ecclesiastical tradition, we preserve our inviolable right to be in this community, whilst we gladly and zealously accept the duties attaching to this right. The question of the future of Christianity is at the same time a question addressed to the hearts and the consciences of us modern educated men. May we weigh it and consider it well!

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